

University of Nevada, Reno

Student Outcomes Assessment Plan

Introduction

This document presents a definition and a rationale for outcomes assessment at the University of Nevada, Reno, in addition to offering an assessment implementation plan. When considering the prospect of developing and carrying out on-going assessment, faculty and staff might reasonably ask two initial questions: “What is outcomes assessment?” and “Why should we do it?”

Many things can be assessed, from parking space availability to quality of food in the cafeterias. Assessment at the University of Nevada, Reno includes academic program reviews required of all programs by the University and Community College System of Nevada, the descriptive and analytical data from the Office of Institutional Analysis and the course and faculty evaluations completed by students. Assessing student learning and performance outcomes, however, is the focus of the University’s assessment plan and of the Office of University Assessment.

Outcomes assessment at the University of Nevada, Reno refers to documenting student learning and behavior relative to goals and expectations. In academic programs, outcomes assessment provides evidence of what students know and are able to do at specific points in the curriculum compared to program-defined learning objectives. Student service programs may assess student behavior outcomes, that is, demonstrating benefits accruing to students who use those services, as well as the campus community at large.

Purpose

Assessment is intended to help the University fulfill its educational mission. Units of assessment range from individual academic and service programs to the University itself. At the program level, each program is expected to develop and implement a plan to assess student learning outcomes. At the school, college and University levels, University Assessment, Institutional Analysis and other offices will integrate learning outcomes data with other information to answer broader questions about how we are meeting our mission.

How will members of the University community benefit from assessment that justifies the time, effort and resources required? In a broad sense, assessment provides evidence of how well the University is fulfilling its mission, and helps identify areas where improvement may be indicated. The primary benefits of assessment are summarized in three professional and personal rationales.

Program Improvement

As part of its **mission**, the University of Nevada, Reno resolves to:

- *Offer high-quality degree programs in the arts, sciences and in selected professions;*

- *Continually improve the quality of teaching, research and public service activities;*
- *Develop a curriculum that is sensitive to change, but which places a special value on a liberal arts foundation.*

Assuring high quality education through continuous program improvement is perhaps the most compelling argument for outcomes assessment, as it goes to some of the University's stated core values:

- *An unmistakable emphasis on learning and thinking;*
- *High standards for all of us: students, faculty and staff;*
- *Teaching that is clear, well organized, informed, relevant to students' needs, aimed at helping student to learn and think;*
- *Programs that are well conceived, coherent, up-to-date, and centered on the needs of the participants;*
- *The celebration of achievement, giving recognition to our students, faculty and staff;*
- *Shared governance of the university so that all of us who have cast our lot with this enterprise can be participants both in determining our goals and in shouldering the responsibility to achieve these goals.*

Evidence-based education is the principle where program improvement and assessment converge. Outcomes assessment, by documenting student performance, enables faculty and students to determine if learning objectives are being achieved and, if not, to guide discussion of what program modifications may be indicated. The assessment process is cyclical and on going. An active process aimed at continuous program improvement, one definition proposes that:

Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development. [Theodore Marchese]

Accountability

The University of Nevada, Reno provides important and valuable services and, as a public institution, is accountable to a number of agencies and constituencies regarding the quality and efficiency of those services. Documenting student learning and behavior through outcomes assessment will be an important focus of accountability requests.

Accreditation is one area of accountability where this emphasis is manifest. Professional accreditations of academic programs, as well as regional accreditation of the University itself, are areas where the importance of documenting student outcomes is being emphasized. Accrediting bodies are requiring evidence that assessment plans, similar to the Program Improvement process described above, are in place and being used effectively. In the past, such documentation mostly included "inputs," e.g., curriculum descriptions, faculty qualifications, facilities, and "outputs" such as student retention rates, time to degree, etc. What was missing

was evidence of outcomes - what students knew and were able to do as a result of their University experience. Now addressing accountability and accreditation requires documenting all three elements – inputs, outputs and outcomes. The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, the organization that reviews The University of Nevada, Reno for accreditation, has published institutional requirements in the area of assessment that include the following:

- *The Commission on Colleges expects each institution and program to adopt an assessment plan responsive to its mission and its needs. In so doing, the Commission urges the necessity of a continuing process of academic planning, the carrying out of those plans, the assessment of outcomes, and the influencing of the planning process by the assessment activities.*
- *. . . each institution has an obligation to plan carefully its courses of instruction to respond to student needs, to evaluate the effectiveness of that educational program in terms of the change it brings about in students, and to make improvements in the program dictated by the evaluative process. Assessment of educational quality has always been at the heart of the accreditation process.*
- *The intent of the Commission policy is to stress outcomes assessment as an essential part of the ongoing institutional self-study and accreditation process, to underline the necessity for each institution to formulate a plan which provides for a series of outcomes measures that are internally consistent and in accord with its mission and structure, and, finally, to provide some examples of a variety of successful plans for assessing educational outcomes.*

University programs including engineering, education, business, nursing, journalism and more voluntarily submit to professional accreditation reviews. These specialized accreditations have recently included specific requirements for programs to document their specific learning objectives for students, how student learning is assessed relative to those objectives, and how the assessment results are used for program improvement.

Satisfaction

Faculty, staff and students all make significant personal commitments to their University experiences, and they all want those experiences to be successful and satisfying. Outcomes assessment has an important role to play in this regard. The larger context of the higher education experience and even of a specific program curriculum sometimes becomes lost amidst the narrow focus on individual courses, deadlines and requirements. Students can easily lose their vision of the “big picture,” and not have a clear understanding of the thoughtful design underlying the curriculum and of what they will have learned, achieved and be able to do at its completion. In some ways this can happen to faculty as well. A program assessment plan makes explicit what the program intends to accomplish in terms of student outcomes. The faculty interaction and discussion that produces these outcomes often is very useful in affirming a clear, program-wide understanding of the program’s purpose, goals and specific objectives. As this information is shared with students, they are able to see the larger view and the logic behind how all the curriculum pieces fit together. Additionally, the assessment plan reassures faculty and

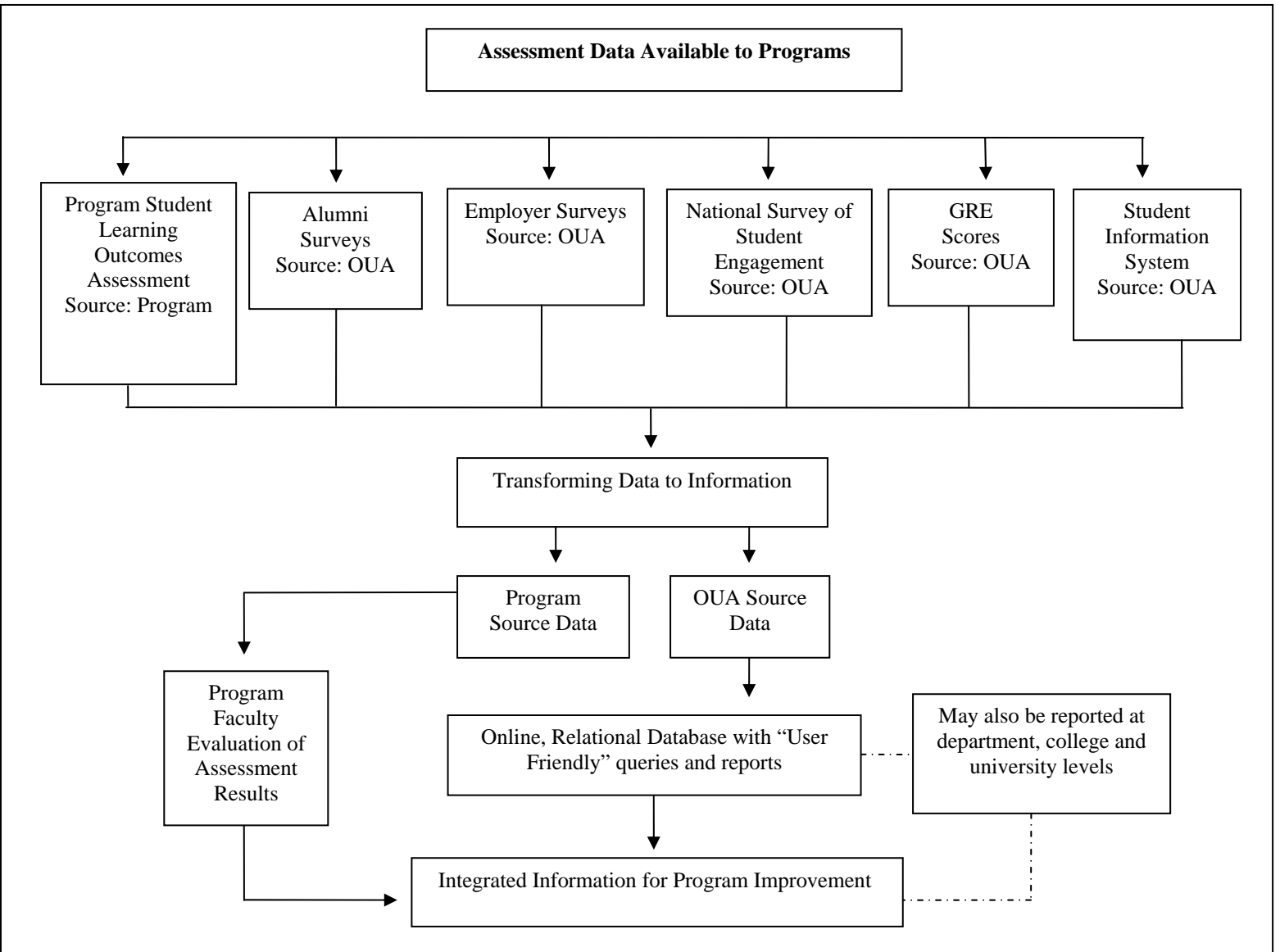
students alike that the curriculum is both working and ever improving. Seeing their effort and commitment come to fruition is reinforcing and satisfying to all concerned.

Outcomes Assessment At The University of Nevada

The Assessment Plan for the University of Nevada, Reno is based on several assumptions, concepts and principles that help guide its design and implementation.

- As required for accreditation by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, all undergraduate and graduate degree programs, including interdisciplinary programs, and key student services programs are expected to design and implement an outcomes assessment plan.
- Outcomes assessment is intended for programs to engage in a continuous improvement process and to document their successes.
- Outcomes assessment information may be aggregated and combined with other information to help schools, colleges and the University assess how well they are fulfilling their missions; it is not used to review individual faculty members or courses.
- Programs are in charge of designing, developing and implementing their outcomes assessment plans.
- Outcomes assessment is ongoing, a continuous improvement process, rather than episodic.
- Assessments should ideally include a variety of measures that evaluate current students, graduates and employers.
- Intended learning outcomes should be communicated to students in the program.
- Program assessment plans and annual summary reports should be accessible to the University community.
- To the extent possible, the University will provide support to programs in the development and implementation of assessment plans.

We believe that the individual program is the proper unit of focus for assuring high quality student learning. Consequently, the program is the focus of our assessment efforts. The following diagram displays how data from the various assessment activities are translated in to useful information which, in turn, flows into individual programs.



* The Core Curriculum, as a unique program, is described in Appendix A.

All elements of the University Assessment Plan are reportable at the individual program level. These elements include data from:

- Student outcomes assessment plans
 - Designed and implemented by each undergraduate, graduate and student services program
 - Used for program improvement
 - Results reported annually
- Alumni surveys
 - All alumni surveyed by telephone one, three and five years after graduation
 - Data gathered on demographics, employment, continuing education, preparation in the major at the University and preparation in the Core Curriculum at the University of Nevada, Reno.
- Employer surveys
 - Supervisors of employed alumni (with permission from each alumnus) are surveyed by telephone one year after graduation
 - Data gathered relate to University's education of the alumnus in relation to the performance requirements expected by the employer at the time the alumnus was hired.
- The National Survey of Student Engagement
 - Data on student behaviors in areas correlated with academic success.
- The Graduate Record Examination
 - Scores on the general GRE exam for all University of Nevada, Reno students taking the exam.

The Office of University Assessment is responsible for providing assessment data to programs for all the above except the Student Outcomes Assessment Plans. While the Office of University Assessment provides workshop and consultation support, along with detailed review and comment of every plan, the Outcomes Assessment Plans are developed and implemented by program faculty and staff. These plans are the foundation of student outcomes assessment at University of Nevada, Reno. The following section provides more explanation of these plans.

Program Assessment Plans

Each program is expected to prepare and implement a plan to assess student performance outcomes. Academic programs naturally are primarily concerned with student learning, while service programs often focus more on student behaviors, attitudes, experiences, etc. Faculty and staff in each program are in control of defining what student outcomes are most important and

how they will be assessed. Each program also is responsible for development, implementation and reporting aspects of their respective plans in accordance with the above timeframe.

The Office of University Assessment will coordinate resources to assist programs in the development, implementation and reporting of assessment plans, including offering workshops to help faculty and staff understand assessment and develop program assessment plans. The Office of University Assessment also is available to consult with individual programs. To facilitate describing assessment plans clearly and consistently, the Office of University Assessment provides programs with templates for submitting their plans and their reports.

A program assessment plan includes the following elements.

Defining student performance outcomes or competencies

Step One - *Program faculty and staff discuss and reach agreement on written statements of intended student performance outcomes.*

The discussions that produce outcomes statements are sometimes difficult, but also may be most enlightening and beneficial explorations of the program's educational mission. As faculty explicitly share assumptions, values and beliefs about how students are expected to benefit from the program, a collective and refined sense of the program's intentions and expectations may emerge. The outcomes statements are of utmost importance as they form the foundation on which the rest of the assessment plan is built.

Types of student performance will be different for service programs than for academic programs. In both cases, statements of performance outcomes describe what students actually demonstrate they know and do – whether participating in career services programs or designing a physics experiment. Outcomes statements focus on student behavior – knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and skills – rather than on instructors, activities or curricula provided for them. The latter are important, of course. They make up the programs designed to enable students to achieve those outcomes. As programs develop outcomes statements, they also must be guided by expectations from professional associations and accrediting agencies, many of which are increasingly emphasizing outcomes assessment as critical to informing program evaluation and improvement. Outcomes assessment tells us how well students are doing, but in so doing it also tells us how well *we* are doing.

Identifying student performance indicators and assessment methods

Step Two – *For each student learning outcome, program faculty and staff discuss and reach agreement on actual student performance that will be assessed and on the assessment instruments and processes that will provide clear and useful information regarding student performance.*

Assessing student performance, though only one element of a program assessment plan, is critical. Clearly, to understand how well program components, as well as the program overall, are working requires assessing student performance. Assessment is an integral and essential part of the educational process. Most programs have some evidence of effectiveness in the form of course-based assessments, student ratings of services received, courses completed, faculty, etc. Even so, the purpose of outcomes assessment is broader than any course or program component and is not satisfied by simply aggregating them. This is particularly true in academic programs where the underlying principles assume synergistic benefits for students who complete the curricula.

Consequently, assessing student performance outcomes, from the *program* perspective, calls for assessments that require students to demonstrate a synthesis of the various courses, field experiences, self-directed learning and other contributions to education. Although the focus is on outcomes for students completing a degree program or participating in a service program, benefits to the program will be greatly enhanced by using mid-program assessments as well. Applying the same outcomes assessment principles to identifying how well students are able to perform at a specific point partway through the program provides formative evaluation data that often enable program modifications during the academic year.

Student learning outcomes usually are abstract statements that cannot be assessed directly. Student performance such as papers, projects, presentations, exams, and performances can be assessed. When the student work is directly related to the student learning outcome, it is called a **student performance indicator**. That is, the quality of student performance on the project or paper is an indicator of how well the learning outcome has been achieved. It is the performance indicator that is actually the focus of the assessment. Each student learning outcome has at least one, but more likely several student performance indicators. In turn, each student performance indicator has at least one **Assessment Method** associated with it. For example, student projects may be evaluated by a faculty committee using a faculty developed rubric. Collectively, all of the student projects evaluated provide assessment data on the performance indicators which helps inform how well the student learning outcome has been achieved.

Such **direct** measures of learning are often called performance assessments. Standardized exams produced by ACT, ETS and some discipline-based professional organizations are examples of instruments available for performance assessment. Often programs will develop performance assessments they believe are more specific and valid for their curriculum. The “gold standard” for determining student competence is known as “authentic assessment.” Their aim is to assess student performance that is as close as possible to what is expected of professionals in their disciplines. Such assessments may involve engaging students in simulation, solving complex problems, completing research projects, writing a thesis, etc. Another form of assessment involves **indirect** measures. Rather than observing student performance, indirect measures assess reflections on program outcomes from sources such as current students, alumni and employers. Service programs, due to the nature of their intended outcomes, tend to rely heavily on such reflective assessments, as well as participation rates and other descriptive data from which to make inferences about program effectiveness.

Assessments identified by programs should:

- Be agreed to and supported by program faculty and staff;
- Be closely aligned with stated performance outcomes;
- Focus on overall program-level outcomes;
- Include multiple kinds of measures, both direct and indirect;
- Be sensitive to the effects of curriculum, instruction or other program components;
- Provide useful information for program evaluation and improvement, including longitudinal analysis;
- Be ongoing and practical enough in terms of time, effort and cost to be sustained over time;
- Include mid-program as well as end-of-program measures;
- Not be used to evaluate individual courses or faculty.

Using Assessment Results

Step Three – *The assessment data collected, sometimes in addition to other available data, are analyzed and presented to faculty and staff for evaluation and consideration of implications.*

At the program level, the dominant reason for assessing student performance is to help guide analysis, discussion and decisions regarding improving curriculum and instruction. In developing a program assessment plan, each program has clearly stated its educational mission along with its major student learning outcomes and associated performance indicators and assessment methods. The mission and learning outcomes serve as reference points for evaluating the curriculum, while data gathered in assessing the performance indicators provide evidence of achievement. Data, in turn, are organized and analyzed to produce useful information, then presented to program faculty for review and consideration. The assessment plan is the product of the faculty and the evaluation and use of results should be as well.

In most instances, program faculty will review assessment results once or twice a year at faculty meetings or retreats. Student performance on all outcomes will prompt discussions about what is working well and should be continued or expanded, as well as outcomes where students' performance is below expectations. Discussions about what, if any, program modifications can and should be made, along with decisions regarding actions to be taken will be made at these meetings. In some cases, a change in the program assessment plan may be indicated, in others a change in some aspect of the curriculum may be deemed appropriate. It is a program-level decision. Programs are not asked to submit assessment data per se, but are asked to complete a report at the end of each academic year and to submit that report to the Office of University Assessment. The report will summarize the extent to which students have achieved each of the program's student learning outcomes.

The Office of University Assessment will provide results of alumni and employer surveys, Graduate Record Examination scores and results from the National Survey of Student Engagement to each program. University level data will be disaggregated to the program level, as well as at the departmental and college/school levels. While useful to programs even in this form, the intention of the Office of University Assessment is to provide an online database that includes the above data along with considerable data from the University's student information

system database. All of this information, connected by confidential student identifiers, will be available to programs through the online database. Programs will be able to query any and all of these related data and receive a summary report in a few minutes. This process helps transform data into customized information that should be very useful for faculty discussions about program improvement. The database will grow as new data are obtained and updated, thereby permitting analyses of changes over time as well.

Designing an Implementation Plan

Step Four – *The procedures, responsibilities and schedules for gathering, storing and accessing data are made explicit.*

In addition to identifying assessment processes and instruments, program faculty and staff need to agree on an implementation plan. Developing the plan may result in initial assessment methods to be reconsidered. The implementation plan must fit two criteria. First, it must allow the collection, analysis and use of the kinds of information required. In addition, it must be workable within the context of the program. An implementation plan is very helpful in guiding the assessment process. However, an implementation plan that provides results with little utility or that collapses under its own weight should definitely be avoided. The structure of an implementation plan is essentially that of a project work plan, clearly delineating the who, what, when, where and how of the assessment plan:

Who is responsible for what assessment activities?

What is being assessed?

When are activities occurring?

Where will assessment activities take place?

How will assessment be carried out?

Answering all these questions will add much detail to this bare-bones outline. The faculty and staff should participate in developing the implementation process, just as they did in creating the assessment plan itself.

Appendix A

Core Curriculum

The Core Curriculum at the University of Nevada, Reno is designed to insure that all students become proficient in areas of content and skill deemed highly important by our faculty.

Consequently the Core Curriculum includes six broad learning objectives. As a result of completing the Core Curriculum experience students should be able to:

1) Compose and communicate effectively in a range of media for a variety of rhetorical and creative contexts.

- 2) Demonstrate an ability to frame and analyze a problem, find and interpret relevant information, develop and evaluate possible solutions, come to well-grounded conclusions, and craft an appropriate argument, report, application, or other expression of such inquiry.
- 3) Understand and apply the knowledge, perspectives, principles, and modes of reasoning employed in the fine arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics.
- 4) Understand how the knowledge, perspectives, principles, and modes of reasoning embodied in the fine arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics have contributed to human achievement.
- 5) Develop habits of mind that foster integrative thinking and ability that allow one to transfer knowledge and skills from one setting to another.
- 6) Demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of culture and cultural difference, and develop the habits of mind that allow for intercultural understanding and responsible individual and social choices for citizens of the global community.

(Adopted 02/13/06)

- Critical thinking and effective writing skills;
- The foundation of quantitative and logical analysis, mathematics and statistics;
- The basis of scientific methods of experimental practices as well as how to construct, test, and apply theories;
- An appreciation of the language of artistic and creative expression in literature and the fine arts;
- A recognition of the cultural underpinnings of society and history; the diversity of cultural experience, values, institutions, and ideas; and the multiple and conflicting traditions that have shaped us.

Assessment

The Core Curriculum's Program Review was completed in the Spring of 1999. One of its many conclusions was that assessment of the Core, and of its courses and programs, needed to be a priority in the coming years. The Core director wrote, "Assessment of the Core Curriculum must be faculty driven, based on a consensus, and only undertaken for the purpose of improving educational programs." The Core Curriculum currently places assessment of its overall goals and requirements at the top of its priorities.

Assessment of the Core Writing Program, initiated in 1999-2000, was a first step in the assessment process. Assessment results pointed to several areas where student performance fell below desired outcome levels. As a result, the Core Writing Program reassessed those areas the

following year. The results of this ongoing Core Writing Assessment led to actions aimed at improving students' writing performance and have suggest other areas in which results may be useful.

One positive action was to institute a faculty development program for instructors of the major Core Curriculum courses on writing and composition, courses taken by nearly all University of Nevada, Reno undergraduates. The assessment results enabled us to focus on clearly identified areas of weakness in student writing that could be illustrated with extensive documentation. The assessment rubrics developed for the assessment process also were available for use by instructors. We expect to see benefits from these faculty development efforts as we continue to assess student writing. One of the areas assessed relates to critical thinking demonstrate in composition. Our assessment plan for the Core Curriculum's critical thinking objective intends to build on the work done in the Core Writing Assessment to apply critical thinking rubrics to writing in other Core areas such as Western Traditions and Capstones. Other implications of the Core Writing Assessment are noted in the October 2000 report.

For example, an educator interested in addressing students' critical reading abilities might learn a lot simply by focusing on the many pages of reader comments on that particular feature in the student portfolios. A new instructor wishing to know our values for student writing and our criteria for excellence in that writing can find all the necessary information –and more- in this report. An administrator wishing to work for improvement in some areas of student performance might take note of the many comments that will be helpful in designing workshops or other teacher preparation programs. . . . though, it is important to see this material in context: as part of an ongoing program assessment begun in 2999 by Core Writing . . .we have aimed at a descriptive assessment, and that is what we have achieved.

The Core Curriculum, with fresh input from a new director and the addition of an assessment coordinator, initiated a focused dialogue with the Cored Board regarding assessment.

Integrating General Education Learning across the Curriculum

Dialogue for the Core Board

1. Should general education provide a common foundation of knowledge for students to share?
2. Should general education expose students to the most important ideas, readings, and events?
3. Should general education seek to provide a common foundation to facilitate the teaching of advanced courses?

Dialogue Focused on Expectations for Student Learning

4. What do members of a college or university and members of specific programs expect their students to be able to demonstrate or represent based on pedagogy, the design of the curriculum, co-curriculum, instruction, other educational opportunities and practices, and the use of educational tools?
5. What should students be able to demonstrate or represent at points along their studies based on these educational practices?
6. What do the curricula and other educational experiences “add up to”?

Dialogue Focused on Verifying Expectations for Student Learning

7. How intentionally do members of an academic community provide opportunities for student to learn what an institution and its programs assert they teach or inculcate.
8. How do faculty, staff, and other contributors to student learning build on each others’ work?
9. Do students have multiple and diverse opportunities to build on previous learning, received feedback, and reflect on their progress toward achieving what an institution and its programs expect?
10. How do academic programs, services, and educational opportunities promote institutional-and program-level understanding, abilities, habits of mind, ways of thinking, and behaving?
11. What educational processes and experiences contribute to and reinforce collective educational expectations?

While this dialogue remains ongoing, what follows is a working draft outline for a new, comprehensive assessment plan for the Core Curriculum.

Assessment Plan Outline (Working Draft)

Hunting the White Elephant: A Roadmap to General Education Assessment

- I. Principles of Outcome-based Assessment for General Education
 - a. Goal (end toward which efforts are directed) (identify & define x goals to assess)
 - i. Tied to mission
 1. Setting (common across campus) (see figure 1)
 - a. Develop outcomes/objectives (objectives are created & agreed upon by all constituencies)
 - b. Communicate objectives to public

- c. Collect evidence (sampling schema created & implemented as agreed—who decides?)
 - d. Review & analyze evidence (appropriate fund allocation to successfully implement process)
 - e. Revise outcomes (formative data are used to revise)
 - b. Outcomes/Objectives for each Core area (see figure 2 & 3)
 - i. Performance indicators/Evidence (what artifacts will be used? Who will decide? Who will read them: within discipline or cross-disciplines or a mixture? Will anonymous student artifacts be available for public display. If so, student permission is required)
 - 1. Assessment methods/Criteria (rubrics—who creates?)
 - a. Direct
 - i. Standards (who defines?)
 - b. Indirect
- II. Glossary of Terms (good assessment plan: Outcomes, Output, Activities)
 - a. Outcome: What students can do when finished class
 - b. Outputs
 - c. Objectives/Activities
 - d. Components
 - e. Performance indicators: Evidence is a student learning byproduct; student actions or behaviors in demonstrating knowledge & skills
 - f. Embedded Assessment: Assessment using the work that student normally produce in their courses: test items, essays, oral presentation, research projects, creative work, etc.
 - g. Rubric: a rubric is a scoring guide that provides criteria to describe various levels of student performance (see Developing & Using Rubrics: Dawn Rodrigues— Empire State College--handout)
 - h. Artifacts: An original piece of work produced by a student to fulfill a course requirement
 - i. Etc....
- III. Stakeholders
 - a. Internal constituencies (Assessment uses *UNR* standards) (obtaining buy-in)
 - i. Faculty
 - 1. Tenure/Tenure track
 - 2. LOA/LOB
 - 3. RA/TA's
 - ii. Students/Parents
 - iii. Administration
 - 1. Academic
 - 2. Student Services
 - iv. Advisory board
 - 1. Faculty
 - 2. Students
 - 3. Staff

- b. External constituencies (Accountability uses *their* standards)
 - i. Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (meet learning standards as detail in the accreditation process)
 - ii. Government
 - 1. Federal
 - 2. State
 - 3. Local (school district K-16) (seamless transition)
 - a. HS guidance & career counselors (match educational goals)
 - iii. Community Colleges (articulation agreements) (maintain quality)
 - iv. System Office/Board of Regents (goal priority and agreement)
 - v. Business Community/workforce (understanding & meeting goals/objectives)
 - vi. Donors & Alumni
- IV. Core Assessment Areas (What are we going to do with the data? Where is it housed? Who has access to the data? How is it reported, when & to whom? IMPORTANT: loop gets closed—formative info gets used—not just summative.)
- a. English/writing
 - b. Mathematics
 - c. Natural sciences
 - d. Social sciences
 - e. Fine arts
 - f. Core humanities
 - g. Capstone courses
 - h. Diversity
 - i. Critical Thinking
 - j. Technology ???
- V. Considerations (what we like to see happen vs. need to happen (minimalist view))
- a. Ideal
 - i. Course Objectives
 - 1. Syllabi include objectives (faculty buy-in)
 - 2. Student exercise—have students write course objectives (student buy-in)
 - 3. Create a culture where students expect to see objectives and outcomes for every class they take
 - ii. Directed teaching to objective curriculum alignment (written, taught, assessed)
 - iii. Faculty learning community for each core area—meet once a month. (narrow & define goals)—unique ideas occur when interdisciplinary or cross disciplines. (faculty willing to invest the time)
 - 1. Identify goals/outcomes (limit number—not everyone is going to be satisfied) (evolve over time—not static)
 - 2. Take outcomes and breakdown to manageable objectives
 - 3. Define performance indicators—student work/artifacts that demonstrate achievement of outcomes; opportunity for different

- ways of demonstrating learning. (How are they chosen? Who picks?)
- 4. Have faculty teach Board members or legislators to the importance of assessment
- iv. Student voice (long term)
 - 1. Include them in the development of course objectives (faculty ownership of curriculum. Feedback through course evaluation—how well did course meet expectations; did course have objectives? Did they meet objectives?)
 - 2. Members of Core Board & learning community committee (is occurring)
- v. Buy-in
 - 1. Faculty
 - a. Link to what faculty value (research, teaching, recognition)
 - b. Respect disciplines: understand the value of different methods of research by discipline
 - c. Monetary
 - i. Pay them to help design & implement the process (goals, assessment, feedback, etc.)
 - ii. Reduced course load for process development
 - iii. Assessment research grants
 - iv. Department assessment directors (already in place)
 - v. Special assessment committees (core board sub-committee)
 - vi. Feed them and they will come to meetings
 - d. Retention, promotion, tenure, merit
 - i. Scholarship of teaching and learning
 - ii. Promote assessment as a scholarly activity
 - iii. Public recognitions of contributions
 - iv. Assessment is more than service
 - v. Assessment is a way to simplify faculty lives
 - 2. Administration
 - a. Legitimate the relationship between public assessment and institutional gain
 - 3. Students
 - a. Include them in the process (what students should be getting from the educational process)
- vi. Review & Analyze Artifacts (Evidence)
 - 1. Rubrics (close loops)
 - a. Create rubrics for core areas
 - b. Disseminate & assess
 - c. Revise rubrics
 - d. Implement in core areas (repeat to refine rubrics)
 - 2. Collect representative samples (equal number of exemplary, satisfactory, unsatisfactory) for analysis using core rubrics (have faculty identify assignments as item artifacts; create portfolio)

1. Brochures stating assessment of student learning—what you need to know (Eastern Illinois Univ)
2. Inform faculty of institutional commitment to teaching and learning

VI. Strategic Plan: So What Concept

- a. Overview (Assessment is part of curriculum development; assessment can inform fiscal & strategic planning)
- b. Mission
- c. Vision
 - i. Data Use (What are we going to do with the data)
 1. Formative
 2. Summative
- d. Context for Planning
 - i. How to analyze the data
 - ii. Share results with faculty, administrators, students, parents
 - iii. Use results to improve & develop programs
 1. Who it is reported to
 2. Frequency of reporting
 3. When disseminated
 - iv. Ask departments to relate assessment results to annual reports and requests for resources
- e. Goals
 - i. What is good writing? (have composition faculty vs. other faculty define)
 - ii. What mathematics do all our student need?
 - iii. What should a graduate of UNR know, be able to do, or value?
 - iv. How can we know?
- f. Performance Indicator
 - i. Output
 1. Retention figures
 2. Time to degree
 3. Graduation rates
 4. Persistence
 - ii. Outcomes
 1. GPA's
 2. Standardized test scores
- g. Assessment Measures (could have assessment day each semester to test rising juniors & graduating senior. First-years would take exams during orientation, but could also be included in assessment day)
 - i. Direct
 1. Demonstration of ability level
 2. Value added (NCCU requirements)
 - a. Entering student information
 - b. First-year artifacts
 - c. Pre & post-test opportunities (within courses and possibly between—math post 120 is pre 128—stair step))

- d. Mid-level program (rising junior)
 - e. End program (capstone)
 - 3. Standardized exams (embedded assessment)
 - a. ETS (in core areas)
 - b. ACT (in core areas)
 - c. Licensure exams pass rates (nursing, engineering, teaching)
- ii. Indirect
 - 1. Reflective
 - 2. NSSE/FSSE
 - 3. Alumni survey
 - 4. Exit interviews
 - 5. Alumni giving
 - 6. Employer survey
 - 7. Graduating student surveys
 - 8. Staff surveys
- iii. Artifacts
 - 1. e-portfolios materials/artifacts
 - 2. standardized tests
 - a. graduate tests (GRE, MCAT, LSAT)
 - 3. Entrance into graduate schools
- h. Timeline
 - i. Phase one: Identify programs, faculty leaders, & start dates for each area
 - ii. Phase two: Create objectives for program assessment, identify performance indicators/evidence, criteria and standards to be used to demonstrate outcomes (rubrics)
 - iii. Phase three: Communicate outcomes/objectives to internal and external constituencies
 - iv. Phase four: Collect evidence/performance indicators
 - v. Phase five: Review & analyze evidence
 - vi. Phase six: Revise and re-evaluate outcomes/objectives
 - vii. Phase seven: Create and implement programs to address the areas noted for improvement from data.
- i. Resource Allocations
 - i. Make fiscal & planning decisions by taking into account assessment results
- j. Support Needed: Fiscal, Structural, and Reward
 - i. Fund activities from outside the department budget (Core dollars)
 - ii. When tenure is granted, provide extra funding with expectations from participating in assessment
 - iii. Create incentives based on assessment as a priority

VII. Time Frame for assessing student learning outcomes/objectives

- a. English/writing*
- b. Mathematics
- c. Natural sciences

- d. Social sciences
- e. Fine arts
- f. Core humanities*
- g. Capstone courses
- h. Diversity
- i. Critical Thinking
- j. Technology

* have started this process to a degree

Things to remember to include:

Threat of entropy: anything left unattended will eventually atrophy and die

Academic Freedom: “while academic freedom might be endangered if faculty were required to teach only to certain goals, I don’t believe that asking faculty to make our goals explicit is unreasonable...The problem arises when those not actually involved in teaching or research assume control over the assessment process...” Tom Angelo

Figure 1: Assessment Process

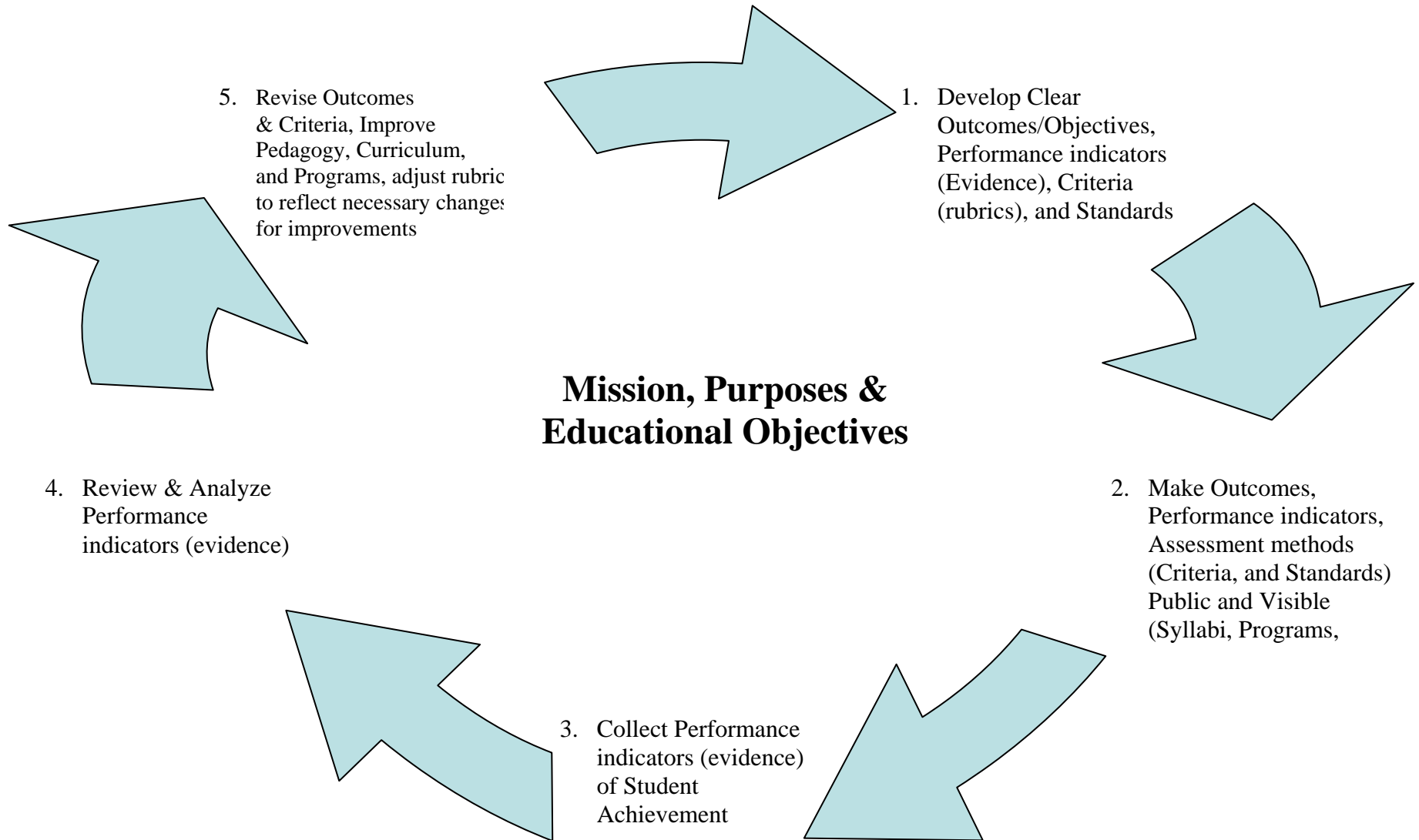


Figure 2: Student Learning Outcome

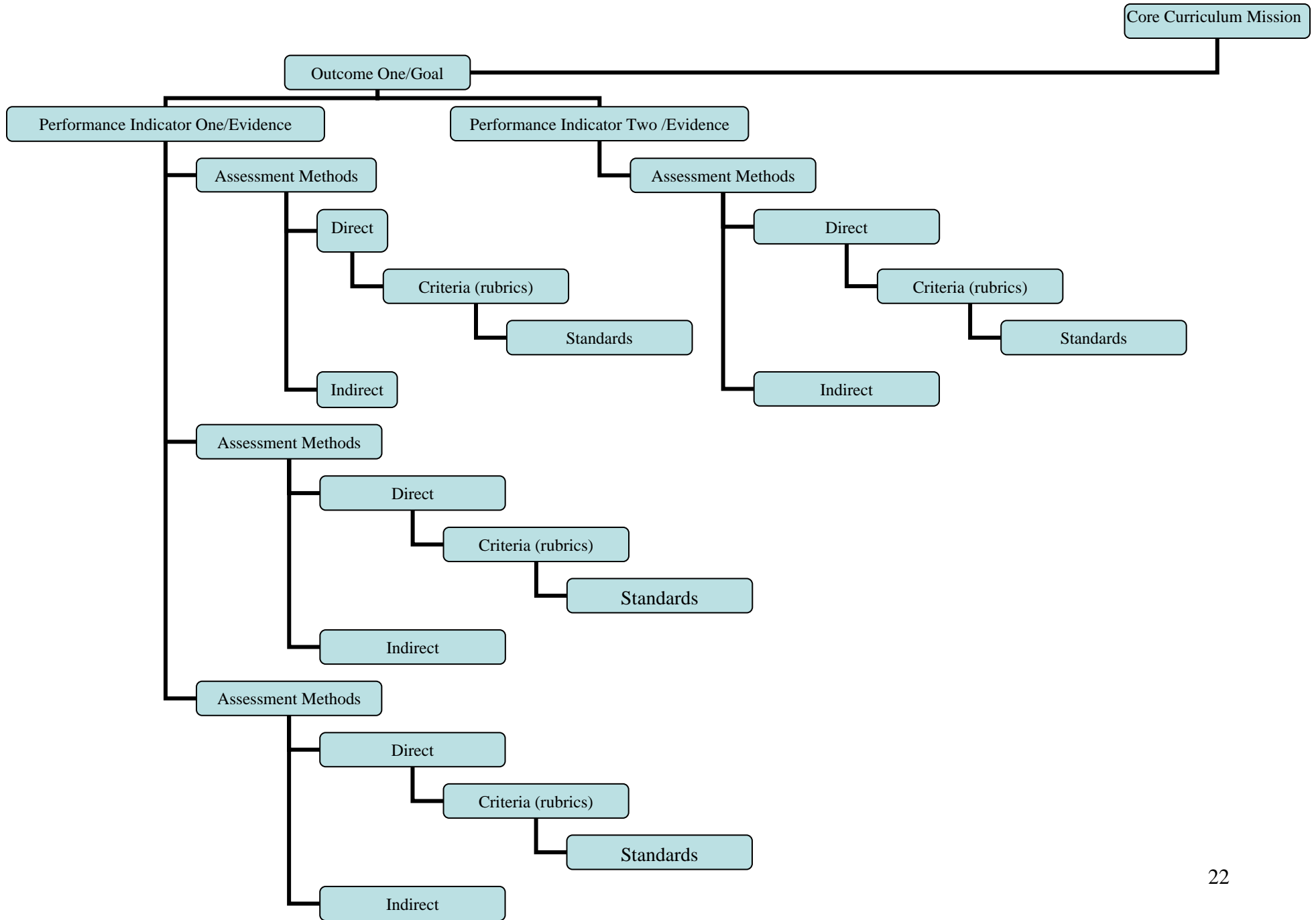
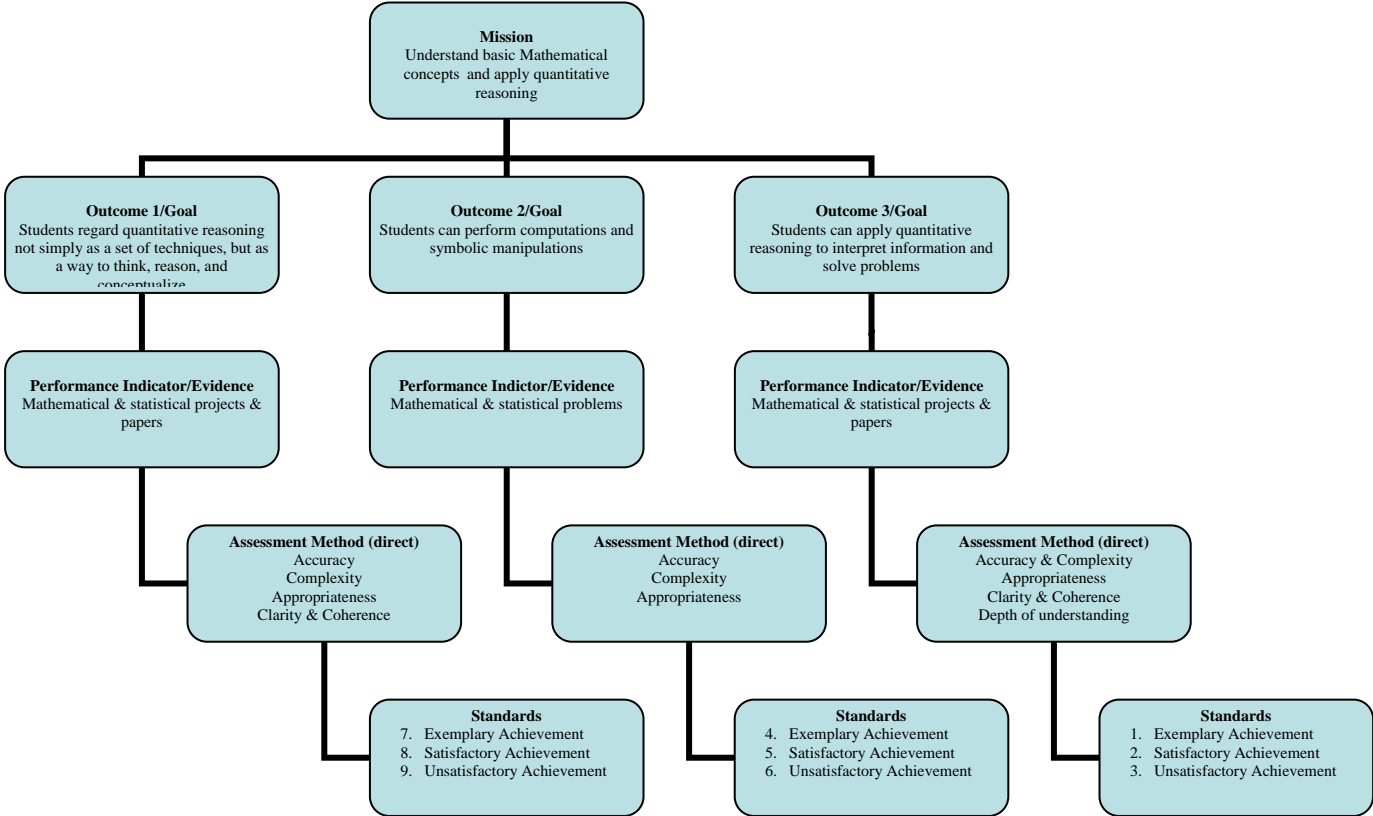


Figure 3: Mathematics Core Curriculum Example



Title: Assessing Learning in UNR’s General Education Program

	Qualitative	Quantitative	Formative	Summative
Writing				
Speaking—First-year & Senior				
Critical Thinking				
Mathematics				
Natural Sciences				
Fine Arts				
Core Humanities				
Capstone				
Diversity				
Technology				

Place an ‘X’ indicating the method of assessment for each of the areas listed above.

Time Line

