



# ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK

2023-2024

*Valuing the individual, educating and serving the community.*

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## Introduction

The Academic Assessment plan provides the structure that aligns all assessment practices at the college; program and course levels with its mission, strategic plan, general education objectives, and HLC standards of quality. It offers information for faculty, academic administrators, and academic support staff of the strategies used for effective assessment at Triton College. With a continued focus on teaching and learning these efforts look to create a culture of assessment and determine what students are learning and using this information to improve and enhance the students' educational experience.

### **Board Policy 6010: Assessment of Student Learning**

Triton College is committed to a collaborative, ongoing process of student learning outcome assessment. The process emphasizes the responsibility that all members of the institution have for our students' success. At the college, assessment includes the establishment of student learning outcomes at the general education, program, and course levels; a cyclical identification of measures, gathered data and analysis of the results at each level; and the design and implementation of action plans based on student performance outcomes serving to improve learning.

Assessment is a crucial activity that guides institutional effectiveness, provides a means for faculty collaboration and professional development, demonstrates accountability, enhances public relations, and justifies public confidence.

Learning outcomes assessment is defined as the ongoing monitoring of the extent to which students are developing the knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes that are appropriate for graduates of the respective academic program(s). Assessment of student learning assists the college in defining program goals and outcomes and course outcomes.

Assessment data provides information to inform the development of robust programs by the faculty, effective curricula, and innovative teaching. Student learning outcomes assessment also assists programs, departments and the college in accreditation by providing evidence of quality teaching and student learning.

Triton College assesses student learning at the general education, program, and course levels to improve the teaching and learning process. This policy affirms the central role of faculty in the assessment process and allows academic programs the flexibility to choose assessment methods that are most useful and appropriate for all learners.

## Mission

The mission of Triton College, *valuing the individual, educating and serving the community* directs all of the work including the assessment efforts at the college to ensure course offerings best serve the needs of our students.

## Assessment Roles and Responsibilities

### **Academic Departments**

Academic departments are responsible for designing, maintaining and reporting on assessment plans for program and course assessment cycles within the department.

### **Director of Curriculum and Assessment**

The Director of Curriculum and Assessment (DCA) oversees the planning and coordination of assessment activity on campus and supports the evaluation and ongoing improvement of learning outcomes.

The DCA's responsibilities are to:

1. Guide and participate in the work of the Assessment Committee and its sub-committees.
2. Consult and offer guidance to faculty in the development of general education, program and course assessment plans and strategies.
3. Compile and disseminate assessment activity reports to department faculty for completeness and accuracy.
4. Submit reports of assessment activity to school deans and department chairs for review and approval as required.
5. Manage the College's Assessment record management system (Watermark Planning and Self Study) for data entry, archival, and creation of reports.
6. Facilitate integration of assessment results with the curricular review process and *vice versa*.
7. In collaboration with Institutional Research, facilitate the dissemination and review of assessment findings to Triton College constituencies for the continuous improvement of academic programs and coordinate the preparation of various assessment reports utilizing assessment data.

### **Academic Deans**

Academic Deans are responsible for reviewing and, as required, approving assessment plans for the programs and courses in their respective schools. Deans will follow up with their faculty for any missing or incomplete data or reports.

### **Academic Assessment Committee**

The Academic Assessment Committee of Triton College, a standing committee of the Academic Senate, is responsible for the development, execution, and support of the college's student learning assessment activities.

The committee's annual responsibilities are to:

1. Review Assessment Committee core documents including the mission, handbook, and assessment calendar, and revise as needed.
2. Write/revise/maintain student learning outcomes for general education.
3. Research proprietary assessment tools and/or design assessment tools to assess student learning outcomes for general education.
4. Assess student learning outcomes for general education, per the assessment calendar.
5. Coordinate and support assessment of student learning processes within departments
6. Analyze assessment data.
7. Make recommendations based on assessment findings.
8. Communicate assessment activities, findings, and recommendations through a variety of methods: newsletter, website, reports, presentations, and other strategies.

The Academic Assessment Committee is further subdivided into five subcommittees that are primarily made up of committee members and are led by at least one voting member of the Assessment Committee. All major work is presented to the Assessment Committee for approval/vote.

- General Education Subcommittee
- Program and Course Assessment Subcommittee

- Mentoring and Outreach Subcommittee
- Peer Review Panel Subcommittee
- Learning Improvement Week Subcommittee

## Assessment Process

Triton College is committed to a collaborative, ongoing process of student learning outcome assessment. The process emphasizes the responsibility that all members of the institution have for our students’ success. At the college, assessment includes the establishment of student learning outcomes at the general education, program, and course levels; a cyclical identification of measures, gathered data and analysis of the results at each level; and the design and implementation of action plans based on student performance outcomes serving to improve learning.

With the understanding that assessment is a continuous process, the following process will guide the faculty and staff in their efforts: identify outcomes, develop assessment tools to assess and measure each outcome, use assessment tools to gather evidence, review and analyze results, implement changes, document impact of those changes on goals and outcomes, and report efforts to Triton College stakeholders.

## Program and Course Assessment

Student learning is examined through the Triton College Academic Assessment Process, including any grouping beyond a single classroom such as a degree, program, or series of courses within a discipline. Assessment of all academic programs and courses occurs over a 3-year cycle and uses the Watermark Planning and Self-Study platform to document all assessment activity.

At the beginning of every 3-year cycle, the DCA will work with department faculty to create a 3-year proposal to assess program and course outcomes, subject to review and approval by the department Chair and school Dean. The goal of this work is to identify the year each program level outcome and its aligned course(s) and course level outcomes will be assessed, ensuring all are completed within the 3-year cycle. The original proposal will be documented as an annual Academic Assessment Plan in Watermark Planning and Self-Study, which will be reviewed each year of the cycle and can be amended if necessary.

Program and Course Assessment Cycle	
<b>Fall</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design assessment plan</li> <li>• Assessment plan due October 1</li> <li>• Measurement artifacts due October 31</li> <li>• Collect student learning data, if appropriate</li> </ul>
<b>Spring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect student learning data, if appropriate</li> <li>• Artifact results due March 15</li> <li>• Share methodology and data during Learning Improvement event (April)</li> <li>• Assessment report with action plan due May 15</li> </ul>

Every annual Academic Assessment Plan will accomplish the following:

1. Review each program's student learning outcomes and curriculum maps to ensure they accurately reflect the current curriculum.
2. Confirm or amend the program's student learning outcomes to be assessed in the current year of the cycle (due October 1 of each academic year).
3. Document which aligned courses, along with their assessment methods and benchmarks, will be simultaneously assessed in order to measure learning in each scheduled program learning outcome (due October 31 of each academic year).
4. Report assessment results (evidence), section counts, or external alignment with the LMS (due March 15 of each academic year).
5. Analyze results with findings.
6. If needed identify an action plan that will be implemented to improve student learning.
7. Provide analysis of the outcome and its combined measure(s)
8. Document any Actions that are not specifically tied to a Measure.
9. Develop a final narrative report of the academic year's assessment activity (due May 15 of each academic year).

Faculty will report the results from each year's assessment activity to their peers at meetings during a spring Learning Improvement event.

### **Assessment Steps**

Triton College is committed to continuing the refinement of its assessment processes to best serve our community to improve student learning and achievement, support critical reflection of teaching, and provide evidence of institutional effectiveness. For the faculty-driven assessment cycles, the following are the steps of assessment and the support that will be provided to complete this work.

1. Create a 3-year assessment proposal to align program and course outcomes.
  - At the start of every fall semester, the Director of Curriculum and Assessment (DCA) will meet with department faculty to facilitate discussions and decisions to plan a 3-year assessment proposal for their department. For larger departments, these may instead be grouped by content areas, (e.g.: Biology/Chemistry/ Physics...).
  - The goal is to align and identify the year each course and its course level outcomes and program level outcomes will be assessed, ensuring all are completed within the 3-year cycle
  - The DCA will work with these faculty members to facilitate recording the created assessment proposals.
  - The DCA will review and discuss the proposal with the department chairperson and Dean if they were not involved with the original conversations.
  - Participating full-time and adjunct faculty will be compensated \$150 each for their active participation in the planning phase (independent of the number of programs/courses) to create a 3-year proposal aligning when each of the program and course outcomes will be assessed, ensuring all are achieved within this defined cycle and entering the details of their proposal into a fillable form. 3-year proposals are due **October 1<sup>st</sup>** each year and upon approval by the Dean participating faculty will be compensated on the next available pay period after payroll documentation is processed.

2. Identify and upload artifacts aligned to assess each year's program and course outcomes.
  - The DCA will facilitate discussions with full-time and adjunct faculty teaching the same courses to help identify the artifact(s) (e.g. assignment/test questions) that will be used to assess each of their program and course outcomes.
  - If common assessment artifacts are not chosen, then each individual faculty member will be responsible for uploading a copy of the artifact they will utilize to the assessment site by October 31<sup>st</sup>.
  - The target for success (% of students that are expected to be proficient in competency measured) will be discussed and identified as a department.
  - The DCA will work with these planning faculty members to facilitate recording each year's program and course assessment proposal and uploading examples of the common assessment artifacts.
  - The DCA will review and discuss the proposal with the department chairperson and Dean if they were not involved in the original conversations.
  - Working with the DCA, the Deans will follow up with faculty for any missing or incomplete reports.
  - Participating full-time and adjunct faculty will be compensated \$150 each for their active participation in the work to plan the alignment of collected artifacts to each year's course and program outcomes (independent of the number of programs/courses), uploading common artifact(s) that will be used, and completion of the fillable form documenting the proposal. This work will be completed by **October 31<sup>st</sup>** each year. Upon approval by the Dean participating faculty will be compensated on the next pay period after payroll documentation is processed.
  
3. Each faculty member will provide the artifact results for both program and course outcomes from their courses in line with what was described in Part II of the fillable Assessment report that was started earlier in the school year.
  - All artifact results should be provided electronically by **March 15<sup>th</sup>** each year.
  - Working with the DCA, the Deans will follow up with faculty for any missing or incomplete reports.
  
4. The DCA will work with the department faculty to discuss and review the aggregated data from the artifacts collected to determine if any action needs to be taken.
  - The aggregated data will be provided of assessment results for the faculty to review.
  - The faculty teaching the same courses will determine if targets were met/unmet and decide on possible next steps. The DCA will help facilitate these discussions if the faculty/chairperson requests.
  - The DCA will review aggregated data and possible next-step actions with the chairperson and Dean if they did not take part in the discussion.
  - The DCA and faculty discussion of the reviewed data and determination of any next steps will be completed by **May 15<sup>th</sup> each year**.
  - The DCA will ensure the final and completed assessment report including any next-step actions is entered.

This procedure for program and course level assessment will complete its first 3-year cycle in May 2026 and will be reviewed and evaluated for effectiveness and its ability to meet the assessment needs of the college. Any changes to the procedure before this time must be agreed upon by both the faculty and administration.

Nothing in this document shall be construed to alter the faculty negotiated agreement.

## General Education Assessment

The Academic Assessment Committee maintains an annual cycle of General Education assessment in order to collect, analyze, and disseminate relevant student learning data and to offer recommendations to the faculty and administration aimed at the improvement of student learning. Assessment of general education outcomes occurs over a 5-year cycle and uses the Watermark Planning and Self-Study platform to document all assessment activity.

Triton College’s General Education Learning Outcomes are achieved as a result of successful completion of the general education requirements for any degree program. The outcomes state that upon completion of a degree program, the student should be able to effectively:

### Critical Thinking

*Explore issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.*

### Communication

*Develop and express ideas in written or oral form.*

### Information Literacy

*Identify, locate, evaluate, and responsibly use and share information.*

### Quantitative Literacy

*Analyze and solve quantitative problems from a wide array of contexts.*

### Global Learning

*Analyze and explore complex global challenges from diverse perspectives.*

General Education Assessment Cycle	
Academic Year	General Education Outcome
2024-2025	Critical Thinking
2025-2026	Communication
2026-2027	Information Literacy
2027-2028	Quantitative Literacy
2023-2024/2028-2029	Global Learning

Institutional Research and Reporting will identify a random sample of courses that include that year’s general education outcome as part of their curriculum to be assessed. A group of faculty working with



the DCA will develop an institutional rubric based on the AACU Value Rubric to evaluate the assessments of these courses. The DCA will oversee administration of the general education assessment through Watermark Planning and Self-Study.

Each General Education Assessment Plan will accomplish the following:

1. Disseminate the rubric that instructional faculty will use to evaluate the assessment of the selected courses.
2. Document the assessment methods and benchmarks of the selected courses that will be used to measure learning in the scheduled general education outcome.
3. Collect assessment results from instructional faculty.
4. Analyze results with findings.
5. Develop a final narrative report with an action plan for the general education assessment.

### **Illinois Community College Board Program Review**

The Illinois Public Community College Act mandates that the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) direct a statewide program review system. Community College programs are required to be reviewed once every five years. This consists of program areas and services including instructional programs that are then submitted to the ICCB.

To align with the ICCB goals of reducing inequities, strengthening programming, and contributing to the economic development of the state, the purpose of the statewide review is to:

1. Support strategic campus-level planning and decision-making related to instructional programming and academic support services, including but not limited to program revisions, program closures, and revisions to services.
2. Address inequities to support program improvement.
3. Support the delivery of locally responsive, cost-effective, high-quality programs and services across Illinois' community college system.

### **Department of Research and Institutional Effectiveness**

The Department of Research and Institutional Effectiveness provides research and analysis and supports decision-making processes for student success and institutional effectiveness throughout Triton College. This department leads the gathering, processing, and presentation of quality, actionable information. Several reports on measures of student success are posted on their website that address topics such as persistence, retention, and graduation rates.

### **Programmatic Effectiveness and Outcome Results**

Programs with specialized accreditation post their Effectiveness and Outcome results on their program websites.

## Contact Information

For questions or concerns regarding any portion of the Academic Assessment Plan, please contact:

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## Assessment Glossary

### Assessment

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

### Academic Program

Academic programs are defined as any unit of study resulting in a certificate or a degree.

### Curriculum Map

A curriculum map is a visual representation of what occurs in an academic program to foster desired knowledge, skills, and values. It shows alignment between a program's curriculum and the learning outcomes of the program by demonstrating which learning outcomes are met by each course in the program.

### Direct Methods vs. Indirect Methods of Assessment

#### *Direct Methods*

Direct methods evaluate student work products in light of learning outcomes. They offer specific information regarding how much students have learned. Examples of direct methods include exams and rubrics for capstone projects, portfolios, papers, and performances.

#### *Indirect Methods*

Indirect methods evaluate student perceptions or presumptions about their own learning as well as the educational environment that supports that learning. Examples of indirect methods include surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

Direct Methods	Indirect Methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Written exams and quizzes</li><li>• Performative tasks</li><li>• Presentations</li><li>• Assessed classroom activities</li><li>• Peer review</li><li>• Capstone projects/portfolios</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Graduation &amp; retention rates</li><li>• Student reflection activities</li><li>• Alumni &amp; employer surveys</li><li>• Transfer rates</li><li>• Next course success</li><li>• Job placement rates</li><li>• Program GPA</li></ul>

### Formative Assessment vs. Summative Assessment

#### *Formative Assessment*

Formative assessment is completed throughout a course to provide information and feedback to improve student learning and the quality of the course itself. Formative assessment (which happens during the "formation" of student learning) gives the instructor information on what individual students, or the class as a whole, needs to practice, to have re-taught, and to learn next. This process also includes reflection on the learning process, timely feedback to students, and modifying an instructor's teaching approaches.

### Summative Assessment

Summative assessment gauges how much a student has learned at the completion (or summation) of a student's studies. It involves gathering and interpreting evidence of student learning at the end of a course or program. Common summative assessments are exams, papers, and projects.

Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment
Assessment <u>for</u> learning	Assessment <u>of</u> learning
Taken at varying intervals throughout a course to provide information and feedback that will help improve (1) the quality of student learning and (2) the quality of the course itself.	Taken by students at the end of a unit or semester to demonstrate the sum of what they have learned.

### Learning Objectives and Learning Outcomes

#### Learning Objectives

Learning objectives are broad, mission-like statements that give overarching expectations for student learning. They are not as narrow as learning outcomes and are used to guide learning from a bigger-picture perspective. There are different levels of learning objectives, such as course objectives and program objectives.

#### Learning Outcomes

Also called Student Learning Outcomes (or SLOs for short), learning outcomes are clear, concise statements that describe what students can demonstrate as a result of a given educational experience. They are specific statements often written using the format, "Students will be able to..." followed by an active verb. There are three levels of learning outcomes: course-level learning outcomes, program-level learning outcomes, and general education learning outcomes.

Example learning outcomes:

- *Students will be able to craft a well-reasoned thesis statement.*
- *Students will be able to calculate the costs of loans with different interest rates to determine which one they should apply for.*

### Rubrics

A rubric is a scoring guide used to express defined, consistent criteria for evaluation. Rubrics allow instructors to:

- Assess assignments consistently from student-to-student.
- Give timely, effective feedback and promote student learning in a sustainable way.
- Clarify expectations and components of an assignment for students.
- Refine teaching skills by evaluating rubric results.

At the same time, rubrics help students:

- Understand expectations and components of an assignment.
- Become more aware of their learning process and progress.
- Improve work through timely and detailed feedback.

## References

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