

Documenting and Advancing Undergraduate Learning at KU: A Resource Guide for Departments and Programs

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OVERVIEW

Faculty members in many KU departments and programs are asking “What do we want students to learn in our courses?” and “How can we tell if our majors are prepared to succeed in our field?” This guide was developed with the help of departments who participated in a pilot program that addressed those questions, and the guide outlines steps the departments found useful. The process described here captures students’ progress in an entire program, not an evaluation of an individual course or an individual instructor. By completing this process, departments can identify areas where they are achieving learning goals and discover areas that would benefit from development.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Developing goals and criteria

In a conversation with the whole faculty, the department/unit discusses what they want to know about the intellectual skills, knowledge and understanding of students as they progress through the program. The department identifies key goals that a successful student would demonstrate. A small committee articulates sub-components of each goal. The committee then describes what beginning, intermediate and advanced understanding might look like for each component.

With the support of the chair, the committee presents its list of goals and a framework for evaluation to the whole department for commentary and refinement. Once feedback is incorporated, the initial round of evaluation is based on these shared goals.

After the department reaches consensus on goals and criteria for evaluation, the committee and the chair ask colleagues to identify which of these goals are covered in their courses or at critical points in a program. The committee uses this information to construct a map showing which courses provide instruction on the primary program goals. The committee and the chair can use the map to ask faculty colleagues to identify assignments in their courses that give students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Collecting student work

Once the department has a map, the unit collects examples of student work to build an archive for each course goal. The archive should include work from multiple courses and instructors. Samples should be selected from assignments that give students a chance to show high-level achievement.

The feedback from this evaluation will be based on an entire program, not just any individual course, so it is important that each sample of student work reflect a range of courses that would contribute to the student’s achievement of that goal.

WHAT WE’VE LEARNED

The English department has participated in the KU pilot program since 2009. Based on our goals for the English major, we have devised a framework to evaluate student learning in select introductory and advanced courses in the major. We have been steadily gathering data that will show us how student skills develop between introductory and advanced courses. We are gathering valuable information about how well we teach critical reading, writing and research skills, and about where we might need to put more emphasis in order that our students can get the most out of their careers as English majors. In addition to learning more about our students’ strengths and needs, we have also been able to see specifically how a new required introductory course in theory and criticism (one of the 300-level courses that we studied) is improving student performance overall.

—Anna Neill

Evaluating progress

At this point, the committee brings a prospective framework for evaluation to colleagues for approval. When they review the framework, department members should focus on whether the framework, overall, captures student development from beginning to advanced understanding.

A larger group of department members constitute a reading committee (which could include graduate students, as explained on the following page) to identify patterns of student performance in the unit archive. Using the identified criteria, readers describe how student work is distributed across the framework of learning goals and components of achievement levels. This description is not based on grades from individual courses, but on an independent reading of demonstrated skill in the quality of the student work found in assignments from a range of courses.

After evaluating student work, the reading committee prepares a summary document and presents it to the department. The department receives an overall picture of strengths and weaknesses in the range of understanding and knowledge among students at a particular point in the program.

Determining next steps

Using the summary of how many students are at each level of development on each goal, the department as a whole reflects upon what this evidence tells them about how well students are meeting learning goals, and the department identifies changes they might implement to better accomplish their own programmatic objectives.

OPTIONS FOR DEPARTMENTS/UNITS

A few years ago, the Provost's Office asked the Center for Teaching Excellence to develop a pilot program and serve as a consultant to various units on campus as they identified ways to document learning in their programs. CTE's role was to offer resources and feedback, organize meetings with unit representatives, and provide examples of assessment processes. Based on the success of this pilot project, a menu of options were designed to assist units as they document and develop program learning, listed below:

- Independent unit measurement: Unit works independently to define, track and report outcomes.
- Online resources and guidelines: Unit chooses from several examples and guidelines on the CTE website to identify how they will define, track, and report outcomes.
- Workshop/collaborative support: Unit sends representatives to collaborative workshops facilitated by CTE (workshop schedule available at www.cte.ku.edu/schedule). As a supplement to online resources, the workshops will provide dedicated opportunities to share and discuss goals, methods and progress for defining, tracking and reporting outcomes.
- Individual unit consultation: Unit works one-on-one with CTE Faculty Fellow or staff to discuss goals, methods and progress for defining, tracking and reporting outcomes. This option can be used in addition to the collaborative workshops and/or online resources available on the CTE website.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Before a department begins this program, the chair and other department leaders need to be committed to the process. Leadership buy-in would be demonstrated by periodic inclusion of this project on faculty meeting agendas and in the service structure of the department. When chairs set a reasonable timeline for the activities, with target dates, the process is most likely to continue.

This process is continuous and iterative. Frequently observing and discussing the quality of students' work is part of a successful instructional program. The key to sustaining the process is gathering a small but random and representative sample of work all the time, asking only central questions on a subset of goals in a subset of years. Over time the pattern of evidence of learning will make sense, so it is better to be selective and steady than to do too much in a given year.

In the following pages, the process is sketched in optimal order of occurrence, but departments are encouraged to modify the steps based on their needs and purposes. Information that should be included in reports is noted in the Process Notes column; supplemental information and examples are provided for each step, as well. For assistance with any part of the process, contact the Center for Teaching Excellence at 864-4199 or cte@ku.edu.

Developing Goals and Criteria

Program Goals

PROCESS NOTES

REPORT:

What are the department's 3–5 key program goals?

What might beginning, intermediate and advanced levels of understanding of each goal look like?

Going Deeper:

Why is it necessary for students to achieve the key goals?

What background knowledge and experiences do students bring to the program?

More Information:

See page 37 for help with writing learner outcomes.

NOTA BENE: PROGRAM GOALS

The Department of English's program goals are listed in order of priority. The list has also helped the faculty plan the order in which they will examine students' achievements in these four areas.

In a conversation involving the whole faculty, the department/unit should discuss what they want to know about the intellectual skills, knowledge, and understanding of students as they progress through the program. In many units this has already been accomplished through interaction with accrediting bodies and professional organizations, making the first step straightforward. The department's conversation should include recognizing that there will be variation in the success that students demonstrate.

In the early stages of this process, the department should identify and select a handful of key program goals, or central features, that a successful student would show in your department. In every discipline, there are a few intellectual goals that most professionals see as essential. The process should focus initially on that limited subset, rather than the full domain from the outset.

A small committee (generally two to four people) should be appointed to articulate sub-components of each goal, including knowledge, skills, and broad understanding. The committee would begin to describe what beginning, intermediate, and advanced understanding might look like for each component. This framework provides a road map for the process, so it should be constructed with some care.

EXAMPLE 1: PROGRAM GOALS—DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Goals for the English Major:

1. Enhance critical thinking and writing skills. Students will:
Enhance the skills, knowledge and vocabulary they need to organize, evaluate and apply new information.
Develop their ability to write clearly and effectively.
2. Understand and practice major critical and research methodologies. Students will:
Develop understanding of the different forms of critical inquiry practiced in the discipline of literary, language and writing studies.
Develop skills and knowledge to conduct independent research.
Develop intellectual integrity.
3. Develop knowledge of major texts and movements in the history of English literature and language. Students will:
Understand and appreciate texts written in different genres and different historical periods.
Understand and appreciate the development, culture and diversity of societies, past and present, through the study of literary texts and the English language.

4. Foster creativity. Students will:
 - Understand and appreciate the various forms of creative writing (e.g., fiction, poetry, non-fiction, drama, etc.).
 - Produce original critical and creative work.
 - Foster creative growth of peers in workshops and discussion.

EXAMPLE 2: LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING—DEPARTMENT OF SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE

340 Analytical Essay Framework:

1. Interesting and identifiable thesis is present early in the paper.
2. Uses solid examples that are particularly apt to the assignment and persuasive to support ideas.
3. Evidences close analysis of text.
4. Coherent shape and direction to the writing that leads to a conclusion that does not merely restate introductory ideas.
5. Evidence of basic analytical vocabulary for literary studies.
6. A variety of constructions, moods and tenses in an accurate and comprehensible manner. Some sophistication. No major errors.
7. Paper evidences good technical skills: spelling, accentuation, avoidance of Anglicism and obvious translations.

540 Analytical Essay Framework:

1. Formulates a thesis (i.e., takes a point of view), supports and extends it in a sophisticated manner, and brings it/the reading to new conclusions.
2. Analyzes texts and synthesizes material, interpreting it/them with a variety of techniques.
3. In the process, the paper evidences an ability to read critically (vs. only for information), identifying an author's thesis and arguments, and evaluating whether those arguments convincingly support his or her conclusions. This section may include evaluations of whether the writer has read and appropriately incorporated secondary materials and/or selected theoretical readings.
4. The paper uses a variety of grammatical constructions in a sophisticated and accurate manner. No major errors.
5. Paper evidences good technical skills: spelling, accentuation, avoidance of Anglicism and obvious translations; uses appropriate bibliography and references.

NOTA BENE: FRAMEWORKS FOR LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING

The Department of Spanish and Portuguese takes a developmental approach toward evaluating students' writing. Expectations for 300-level papers are clear and appropriate for that level of student. Expectations for 500-level papers reflect the growth they hope to see in students' work at that point. These expectations are also tied in with the department's program goals.

Unit Consensus

PROCESS NOTES

REPORT:

Does the department, in general, agree that the initial goals are a good place to start?

Does the department, in general, believe that the framework captures students' development from beginning to advanced understanding?

The next step is for the committee to condense the list to three to five key program goals and create an evaluation framework that describes beginning, intermediate and advanced understanding of each goal. With the support of the chair, the committee will present its list of goals and a framework for evaluation to the whole department for commentary and refinement.

Once feedback is incorporated, the initial round of evaluation will be based on these shared goals. Both the goals and the framework of evaluation can be revised or expanded, based on the evidence generated by their initial use.

EXAMPLE 1: STEPS TOWARD CONSENSUS & EVALUATION—DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

The Department of English's plan provided a reasonable amount of time for establishing goals and developing frameworks; these are foundational for the project. The plan also reflects the department's steady pace; they didn't try to do too much any given year.

Assessing selected student papers according to framework of skills keyed to Goals for the Major:

2008	Development of goals for the English major
2008-09	Development of frameworks for assessing papers
Fall 2009	Collection of sample papers from two 300-level courses in the major program
Spr-Fall 2010	Assessment of 300-level papers according to frameworks; revision of frameworks
Fall 2010	Collection of sample papers from three 500-level courses in the major program
Spring 2011	Assessment of 500-level papers according to frameworks

EXAMPLE 2: GOALS/METHODS—DEPARTMENT OF SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE

The Department of Spanish and Portuguese looked within existing courses and existing assignments to identify where they could evaluate the learning targeted in their department goals.

Goal: To assess the extent to which our undergraduate majors are meeting the desired learning outcomes established by our program in terms of their writing (and the critical thinking and analytical skills necessary for successful writing in the discipline of literary and cultural studies).

Method: We targeted the entry- and exit-level courses of our major curriculum (SPAN 340 and SPAN 540) for assessment and developed a framework for evaluating the written work to be collected at those levels (in both cases, the final written project of the semester). After removing student names, faculty volunteers anonymously evaluated the collected writing samples according to the frameworks that we developed.

COLLABORATION: DEPARTMENT OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

The following article, "Pain-free Department Collaboration on Improving Learning," by Sara E. Wilson, was first published in CTE's *Reflections From the Classroom* in Spring 2008.

"If you've done six impossible things this morning, why not round it off with breakfast at Milliways, the Restaurant at the End of the Universe?" —Douglas Adams

If your professorial life is anything like mine (and I'm certain it is), you are meeting grant deadlines, writing journal papers, trying to keep track of graduate students' research projects, developing lectures and assignments for students in your classes, keeping up with grading, attending meetings, wading through emails each day... Does it seem like you'll never be caught up? So, I can understand why you may roll your eyes when I suggest that your department might, as a unit, consider student learning not only within a single class but also across a curriculum. This is why I would like to propose "pain-free" departmental collaboration on improving student learning.

In 2007, our department was asked to participate in the Provost's Project on Documenting Undergraduate and Graduate Learning Success, and I was one of two representatives selected from our department. This project was to develop models for examining and improving learning across a curriculum. Our department had already made progress in this direction as a result of the requirements for accreditation mandated by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). Accreditation as an engineering program requires demonstration of outcomes-based achievement of a number of educational objectives. In this project, we have attempted to examine our outcomes-based assessments and to identify a systematic and targeted approach to how we might examine student learning. The following are some of our thoughts on how best to go about a departmental collaboration on improving student learning.

Motivation is one important feature in getting colleagues to agree to departmental collaboration. What will this do for us? What will this do for our students? The motivation for any such effort is the key to getting faculty to buy into the process. For our department, maintaining accreditation is an obvious motivation. Without accreditation, our students will have trouble getting the jobs they might want. However, for a department without accreditation requirements, this process still has to be grounded in meaning. One of the most obvious motivations is to make sure that all of your graduates are versed in the fundamentals of your field and that no student is able to fall through the cracks. Maybe you think no student should be able to graduate in biology without a solid understanding of phylogenetic trees. Maybe you think no student should be able to graduate in art history without being able to distinguish an impressionist painting from a romantic one. When we focus solely on our own classes, it can be hard to tell if we are covering the same topic in several classes or if we are all assuming another class is covering an important topic. We cannot tell if exposure to a topic in the freshman year is enough for students to still be able to understand and express it in their senior year.

Along with appropriate motivation, a department has to agree on some **shared learning goals**. Nothing can get our department arguing more than what are the most important concepts our students need to learn. Some believe that engineering theory and mathematics are most important. Others believe that students need to know how to approach real-world problems and build work-

NOTA BENE:
UNIT CONSENSUS

Based on the experiences of the Department of Mechanical Engineering, Sara Wilson suggests four steps that units should take to collaborate on improving learning:

1. Establish motivation: Get faculty buy-in. Consider: What will this do for us as a faculty? What will this do for our students?
2. Establish shared learning goals (see Program Goals).
3. Develop specific and measurable outcomes. Select outcomes that will give you the information you need but will not be too cumbersome to collect.
4. Consider the process of evaluation of your outcomes. What are you going to do with the information you collect?

ing prototypes. Students should know how to teach themselves and be lifelong learners. Students need to be able to communicate their ideas clearly. Students should know the laws of thermodynamics. We could debate this for hours and occasionally do. Most of our faculty (including myself) believe that the specific area in which we work and the knowledge needed for that area is the most critical. To identify some initial shared goals, I would suggest focusing on those topics that are covered in multiple classes and for which you expect students to show continued progress over the four or so years of their undergraduate degree. For our department, three areas come to mind: communication, ethics, and economics. Our department regularly surveys alumni about what topics we should cover more thoroughly, and without fail they say they wish students had stronger communication skills. Both writing and oral presentation are important elements of engineering work. Other than English 101 and 102, we have no courses that cover such skills, particularly in an engineering context. Instead, we have a number of classes with both written and oral projects that attempt to improve those skills. Similarly, engineering ethics and professional responsibility are discussed in a number of courses. Important topics for a practicing engineer, these subjects always compete with the technical topics for time in any course. Finally, understanding the economic factors of engineering work is important and is also covered broadly across several courses. It may be easiest for your department to start with just one topic.

Once your department has identified a topic you wish to study across the curriculum, the next challenge is to develop **specific and easily measurable outcomes**. Outcomes come in a variety of forms. For our accreditation process, we collect grades in all of our courses, GPAs of the students, entrance exam scores, retention/drop out rates, time to degree, job placement statistics, and student performance on engineering licensing exams. We survey the students as seniors, the students who graduated in the last five years, the mechanical engineering faculty, and employers of our students. Every six years, we save syllabi from every undergraduate course along with representative samples of all classroom assignments and exams (high, medium, and low). Our department collects a great deal of information. Some of this is more useful than others. The average grades in courses are difficult to interpret and so are used generally only to combat grade inflation. The senior surveys give us a good impression of our students' experiences but sometimes need to be considered in light of students' lack of experience in the field and perspective. This can be balanced by alumni and employer surveys, but these are often difficult to obtain.

To examine learning across the curriculum, it is important to select outcomes that will give you the information you need but will not be cumbersome to collect. Because we wish to understand student learning, we have recently focused on our senior capstone design projects. These projects require demonstration of a mastery of basic engineering concepts, ability to assess a problem and identify design objectives, ability to create and follow through on a coherent design process, creative thinking, ability to examine economic factors, and written and oral communication. To examine these skills, we are currently developing a standard, rubric-based assessment that can be used across the three capstone design courses that seniors in mechanical engineering can take. For each of our target categories, we are asking our evaluators to assess the students' design presentations by matching students' work to three to five levels of performance. For the capstone projects, these assessments can be completed not only by the instructor of the design course, but also by the alumni advisory board and industrial sponsors who evaluate this work, giving us an important outside perspective of our students. This assessment can also be used in the sophomore and junior level courses to examine progress through the curriculum. The goal of this outcome measure, and any measure you might choose to use, should be to answer the questions you are asking. Also, I can not overemphasize the importance of making the measures quick and easy to use. Overworked and busy faculty members and outside evaluators do not need a large extra burden, and they will much more easily acquiesce to something that has little impact on their workload.

In order to make this process useful, it is important to consider the **process of evaluation** of your outcomes. What are you going to do with the information? Again, our accreditation requirements include documentation of a process of evaluation of outcomes and curriculum improvements based on this evaluation. For this purpose, we have a standing outcomes committee within our department. While a standing committee may be more formal than is really required, developing a plan to share the outcome data collected with your department and to discuss how the data might be used is important to make the outcome measures effective. Without such a plan, collecting the data may seem useless. By developing a plan ahead of time, you can be more sure that your outcome measures will answer your learning questions.

In the end, successful department collaboration on student learning requires identifying learning goals that span your department, tapping into what motivates your faculty, developing specific and easily measured outcomes that answer your questions with the least burden on your faculty, and planning a process of evaluation of the outcomes. While I have outlined a more formal process here, similar methodology could be used within small subgroups of faculty teaching courses with similar learning goals. With a bit of focus and planning, this can be a process that is rewarding rather than cumbersome and bureaucratic. Making this process as effective and painless as possible will prevent it from becoming one of the six impossible things we have to do. We might even have time for breakfast at Milliways (or maybe Milton's).

Developing Evaluation Frameworks

PROCESS NOTES

REPORT:

Submit a framework that identifies goals and levels of achievement (beginning, intermediate, advanced) for each goal. The report should include the date the department reviewed, revised (if necessary) and approved the final framework.

NOTA BENE: FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

On the following page, an excerpt of the Department of Theatre's first draft of their evaluation framework is provided. For more information about developing frameworks, see pages 37-45.

A successful academic program guides students' intellectual growth from the perspective and knowledge of a beginner to a more advanced and nuanced level of understanding. Faculty need to articulate their perception of these levels of development so that readers of student work can identify how far students have come along that path toward intellectual maturity and sophistication. Some development is well captured by description of a amount or range. For example, breadth of knowledge of the findings of a particular field of study lends itself to descriptions based on more or less. Other forms of development will be represented by qualitative shifts in sophistication, in treatment of observations or evidence, or in layers of capacity for conceptual analysis.

Establishing these frameworks is important. Skill can be learned by reading examples from a familiar field or by reading books on framework design and using them as guides.

After developing a draft, the committee brings the prospective framework for evaluation to faculty colleagues for discussion and approval. When they review the framework, department members should focus on whether the framework, overall, captures student development from beginning to advanced understanding.

Revising framework language can be incorporated so that assigning levels of understanding is as straightforward as possible. Additional refinements in the framework language are typically part of the first wave of reading student work, but the systems of judgment quickly become stable and reliable indicators of intellectual development.

FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

Developing frameworks can be a difficult step. Departments that have been most successful with this task have approached it this way:

- Start by focusing on program goals. Oftentimes goals will help you make explicit the knowledge, skills and understanding you want students to develop in your program.
- Keep it simple, at least at the beginning. For each goal, list basic characteristics that novices, intermediate and advanced students might demonstrate for each goal.
- Sample some student work to see if those products reflect key points in the framework.
- Give the framework a test run. Ask a small group of readers to use the framework to evaluate samples of student work.
- Using feedback from the trial run, revise the framework. Be willing to make more minor revisions when necessary.

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE'S FIRST DRAFT OF EVALUATION FRAMEWORKS

	Novice	Developing	Advanced	Comments
Textual Interpretation	<p>Reads play at face value, makes judgments based on personal preference.</p> <p>Does not understand structure, meaning and given circumstances.</p>	<p>Conducts appropriate research into the <u>world of the play</u>.</p> <p>Understands structure and meaning, given circumstances.</p>	<p>Able to divine meaning from structure and symbolism, mines the play's layers of meaning, asks interesting questions.</p> <p>Connects meaning found in text to both historical and contemporary issues.</p>	<p>[JLB1]: Language is pretty specific to theatre</p>
Historical Context and Theatrical World View	<p>Lacks historical, sociological, political context for plays. <u>Does not understand relevance of dramas from outside own historical or cultural context.</u></p> <p>Sees archaic style/language as a barrier to understanding and empathy with characters and plot.</p>	<p>Locates play chronologically; demonstrated ability to understand historical context.</p> <p>Conversant with variety of styles, time periods and locales.</p> <p>Engages in basic research on historical, sociological, political and cultural context of a play.</p>	<p>Describes, identifies and understands key elements of theatre production and drama in Western Civilization from Ancient Greece to 20th Century.</p> <p>Conducts research on historical circumstances surrounding the creation and original production of a play. Uses critical thinking to consider historiographical questions a) about the sources that <u>construct the facts of theatre history and the world of the play</u>, and b) <u>strategies of inclusion and exclusion embedded in historical knowledge and language.</u></p> <p><u>Able to identify the capacity of language to indicate socioeconomic, racial and ethnic identities.</u></p>	<p>[JLB2]: Maybe? (Taken from one of Nicole's suggestions)</p> <p>[JLB3]: "context of the play"?</p> <p>[JLB4]: Points like this might fit with Textual Interpretation as well.</p>

Collecting Student Work

Mapping Program Goals in the Curriculum

PROCESS NOTES

Getting Started:

What materials (assignments, exams, portfolios, studio work) link to program goals? Consider key points in undergraduate or graduate programs (capstone courses, comprehensive exams).

How do students demonstrate beginning, intermediate and advanced levels of understanding in the materials with respect to each key program goal?

REPORT:

Using this information, map how the curriculum or program meets key goals.

After the department reaches consensus on goals and criteria for evaluation, the committee and the chair ask colleagues to identify in writing which key goals are covered in their courses or at critical points in a program. For each covered component, the faculty member would describe briefly how students have an opportunity to demonstrate beginning, intermediate, or accomplished levels of achievement.

The committee uses this information to construct a map showing which courses provide instruction on the primary program goals. The map can be presented to the department for discussion, including suggestions for reducing redundant teaching or bolstering instruction for goals that seem underserved. This conversation may be helpful in identifying and filling in pieces missing from the instructional plan.

The committee and the chair can use the map to ask faculty colleagues to identify assignments in their courses that give students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding. The map, showing the location of goals within courses, can also locate goal-relevant assignments within courses.

EXAMPLE 1: LINKING COURSES TO PROGRAM GOALS— DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE

The Department of Theatre is developing an undergraduate capstone course. In Spring 2010, faculty members compiled ideas about the types of projects that would illustrate the kinds of learning they want to see at the end of the program.

Directing:

- Direct a production as part of the University Theatre season
- Direct a production outside of the department (community theatre, student organizations, high schools)
- Direct a one-act as part of THR 609

Acting:

- Play a lead role in a University Theatre production
- Play a lead role outside the department (community theatre, professional/semi-professional company, student organization)
- In a one-person show, act in a compilation of monologues, sketches, songs, etc., to utilize a student's special talents
- In a musical theatre solo concert, act through a compilation of songs, dances, etc., from the musical theatre canon

Design:

- Design for a production that is part of the University Theatre season
- Design for a production elsewhere (community theatre, professional/semi-professional theatre)
- Pair designers with directors working on 609 projects
- Compile a professional portfolio of design projects
- Compile a professional portfolio of design projects and then present it either in an expo setting or to a panel of professors

Playwriting:

- Write a full-length play intended for production, if not actually realized
- Documentary theatre piece à la Anna Deavere Smith; e.g., a student toured through Europe and asked different people their impressions of Americans (time frame was in the early stages of the Iraq war); he then put together a theatre piece from the material he gathered

Research:

- Write a major research paper
- Write a major research paper and then give a presentation, lecture, etc.
- Dramaturg for a University Theatre production
- Dramaturg for a production outside the department (community theatre, professional/semi-professional theatre, etc.)

Integrated:

- During the senior year, show one to two semesters of coursework (possibly replacing a practicum credit) in professional preparation culminating in a showcase of monologues, scenes, songs, etc.
- Once an academic year, present a devised piece of theatre involving all seniors with an acting emphasis, possibly supported by coursework

EXAMPLE 2: ALIGNING ASSIGNMENTS WITH PROGRAM GOALS—SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

Program goal

Instill the ACEJMC “Professional Values and Competencies” in our students.

TV commercial assignment

For this assignment, you will work with one other student as a partner. If everyone does his or her fair share of the work, both members of the partnership will earn the same grade. Your partnership will prepare a strategic message planner, a script, a storyboard and a video of a 30-second TV commercial for a consumer product—a tangible good. (We won’t grade the storyboard; just sketch out each shot so that you visualize the entire commercial before you shoot it.) You may choose your own product. However your choice must fall within these rules: It is sold at retail for less than \$20. It cannot involve alcohol, tobacco or firearms. It cannot be a business or service (unless you get your professor’s permission). It must result in work that you’d be proud to show a potential employer. Please follow the document guidelines in your book for TV scripts, storyboards and SMPs.

Gathering Evidence

PROCESS NOTES

REPORT:

Using your curriculum map, collect examples of student work to build an archive for each program goal. Be sure to include samples that show high levels of student achievement.

NOTA BENE: MATERIALS ARCHIVE

On the following page, you'll see an excerpt from the School of Journalism and Mass Communication's faculty survey, which was used to identify assignments within courses that could be used to build a materials archive.

Once the department has a map of the goals and the places in the curriculum where they might be demonstrated, the unit can collect examples of assignments and student work to build an archive for each of the course goals. This archive needs to be representative, with a minimum of approximately 20 examples, selected randomly. The archive should include work from multiple courses and multiple instructors. The samples should be selected from assignments that give students an opportunity to show high-level achievement. One possible finding is that some courses may not provide students an opportunity to demonstrate the highest levels of unit goals.

The feedback from this evaluation will be based on an entire program, not just any individual course, so it is important that each sample of student work reflect a range of courses that would contribute to the student's achievement of that goal. It is important to treat each sample of student work with respect, including determining how it will be read and by whom.

EXAMPLE 1: FACULTY SURVEY TO MAP GOALS IN THE CURRICULUM—SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

KU Faculty Survey—Assessment of Student Learning

Standard #2 of ACEJMC's accreditation policies evaluates each journalism department or school to determine that "the unit provides a curriculum and instruction that enable students to learn the knowledge, competencies, and values the (Accrediting) Council defines for preparing the students to work in a diverse global and domestic society." Listed below are the ACEJMC's 11 professional values and competencies. For each course that you teach, please explain how you are working to incorporate assessment of competencies/values relevant to that course. Also, please specify any additional measures that you might effectively (in terms of results and time management) incorporate.

Course number: JOUR 676—Strategic Campaigns

Instructor:

ACEJMC value or competency	Does course address this standard?	If so, do you assess relevant student learning?	How do you assess relevant student learning?	What additional assessments, if any, might you effectively use?
Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____ No <input type="checkbox"/> _____	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____ No <input type="checkbox"/> _____	Tests, case study analysis, evaluation of the various elements of a strategic communications plan developed by students working in groups for real clients. The client, outside faculty and practitioners are given an opportunity to critique each other's work.	Benchmark testing for knowledge at the beginning of the semester. A formal portfolio review by professionals in the field. A comprehensive final exam—which is not given because of the time commitment to the group project.
Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____ No <input type="checkbox"/> _____	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____ No <input type="checkbox"/> _____	Student plans books and client presentations. The client, outside faculty and practitioners are given an opportunity to critique each group's work.	Benchmark testing for knowledge at the beginning of the semester. A formal portfolio review by professionals in the field. A comprehensive final exam—which is not given because of the time commitment to the group project.
Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____ No <input type="checkbox"/> _____	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____ No <input type="checkbox"/> _____	Tests, case study analysis, evaluation of the various elements of a strategic communications plan developed by students working in groups for real clients. Students are also required to complete Human Subjects Protection training prior to the conduct of primary research. The client, outside faculty and practitioners are given an opportunity to critique each group's work.	Benchmark testing for knowledge at the beginning of the semester. A formal portfolio review by professionals in the field. A comprehensive final exam—which is not given because of the time commitment to the group project.

NOTA BENE:
PROSPECTIVE MEASURES

Since the School of Journalism and Mass Communication has two major programs (Strategic Communications and News & Information), they established parallel assessment plans for each program.

Within each program, the Assessment Committee looked for materials already being used to evaluate comprehensive learning. These are the backbone of the School's assessment plan.

To that foundation, the School added other measures that would give them a clear picture of students' learning.

Connecting these measures with courses helped the School map how the programs meet key goals.

EXAMPLE 2: EVIDENCE GATHERING PLAN—SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

DIRECT MEASUREMENTS

Tactic 1: Capstone courses (direct measurement of professional skills applied in real-world situations)

A. StratCom

1. Student grades on comprehensive project
 - a. Professor sends to Assessment Committee with a description of assignment and "Bottom Line" comment
2. Client feedback forms (revised to correspond to elements of the ACEJMC PV&C)
 - a. Summary sent to Assessment Committee
3. Annual campaigns professors summit to discuss strengths and weaknesses and consider revisions to StratCom track
 - a. Summary sent to Assessment Committee

B. News/Info (Advanced media classes)

1. Student grades on comprehensive project
 - a. Professor sends to Assessment Committee with a description of assignment and "Bottom Line" comment
2. Annual advanced media professors discuss strengths and weaknesses and consider revisions to News & Info track
 - a. Summary sent to Assessment Committee

Tactic 2: Framework/evaluation tools for individual assignments (from CTE/Provost's Pilot Project on Student Learning)

A. Message development (one representative assignment)

1. Summary sent to Assessment Committee

B. Multimedia reporting (one representative assignment)

1. Summary sent to Assessment Committee

Tactic 3: Pre/post surveys: law, ethics and grammar

A. Administered first in Jour 101 or similar early opportunity to establish benchmark

1. Summary sent to Assessment Committee

B. Administered later in upper level courses to measure learning

1. Summary sent to Assessment Committee

Tactic 4: Student national and regional competitions: Hearst, Dow Jones, PRSA/IABC, CNBAM, others

A. Summaries sent to Assessment Committee

Tactic 5: Client feedback on service learning projects

- A. Feedback from service learning/real-world clients; form to correspond to the ACEJMC PV&C
 - 1. Summary sent to Assessment Committee

Tactic 6: Student internship feedback

- A. Employer feedback forms; revise form to correspond to the ACEJMC PV&C
 - 1. Overall summary sent to Assessment Committee

Tactic 7: Surveys of alumni in the professions

- A. Questions to address strengths and weaknesses of their journalism and mass communication education as it relates to their job duties and aspirations
 - 1. Summary sent to Assessment Committee

INDIRECT MEASUREMENTS

Tactic 1: Student surveys (course evaluation and self-assessment)

- A. Standard University form
 - 1. Compare with University mean
- B. Incorporate the ACEJMC PV&C into a modified addendum form: "This class advanced me toward the fulfillment of this goal ..."
- C. Dean's office sends School summaries—not individual summaries—to Assessment Committee

Tactic 2: Exit interviews/focus groups with graduating seniors

- A. Conducted by Jour 802 Grad Research Methods course
 - 1. Summary sent to Assessment Committee

Tactic 3: Exit interviews with graduating seniors conducted by the University

- A. Done only occasionally
 - 1. Data sent to Assessment Committee

EVALUATION OF RESULTS

1: Revision of individual self-evaluations/annual reports to dean

- A. Include a new category in individual self-evaluations/annual reports submitted to dean:
 - 1. How I assess student learning
 - 2. What I'm learning from assessment
 - 3. How I'm incorporating what I'm learning
 - 4. Copies, minus professors' names, sent to Assessment Committee

2: Creation of Assessment of Student Learning Committee

- A. Establish as subcommittee of/membership appointed by Curriculum Committee
 - 1. All faculty members welcome at all meetings
 - 2. Charge is to compile/analyze assessment reports, make recommendations, report to faculty
 - 3. Committee reports annually: at faculty retreat, to a News & Info Track meeting, to a StratCom Track meeting
 - 4. Committee also reports at faculty meetings as needed

Evaluating Progress

Reviewing Evidence

PROCESS NOTES

REPORT:

For the department, reviewers summarize students' overall performance, noting that particular courses and instructors who contributed to the archive should not be identified.

A larger group of department members, possibly including graduate students, constitute a review committee to identify patterns of student performance in the unit archive. Using the identified criteria in a systematic way, the reviewers describe how the department's student work is distributed across the framework of learning goals and components of achievement levels. Questions are basic and straightforward, such as what percentage of students meet each level of a particular intellectual goal? This description is not based on grades from individual courses, but on an independent reading of the level of demonstrated skill in the quality of the student work found in assignments from a range of courses.

After evaluating the student work, the review committee prepares a summary document and presents it to the department for consideration. The description of department performance should not identify the particular courses or instructors who contributed to the archive. Rather, the department receives an overall picture of strengths and weaknesses in the range of understanding and knowledge among students at a particular point in the educational program.

EXAMPLE 1: FRAMEWORK FOR REVIEW COMMITTEE— DEPARTMENT OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

On the following page, the Department of Mechanical Engineering's Evaluation of Student Learning Outcomes in Design is provided. On the actual form the department uses, the back page allows space for comments on students' posters, as well as comments on the framework itself, including topics addressed, wording and layout.

EVALUATION OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES IN DESIGN				Group Evaluated:
For each topic, circle the category that best describes the team poster and presentation. Mark N/A for categories not covered by the poster presentation.				
Identifying Functional Objectives				
Students have addressed all objectives and identified primary (key) and secondary (desired) goals. Key goals are matched in design plan.	Objectives clearly address design goals and client demands, but are incomplete or missing some elements. Objectives identify key goals and match design plan.	Objectives are inadequately described or do not match design plan.	Functional objectives do not appear to have been considered.	Not Available
Engineering Analysis and Methodology				
Key design elements all correctly and appropriately analyzed. Students demonstrated knowledge of key engineering concepts applied to a real-life situation.	Some analyses appear to be missing, but analyses that are described appear to be correct and demonstrate sound knowledge of engineering concepts.	Analyses that should have been performed were missing or performed incorrectly. Students appear not to understand some key engineering concepts.	Students did not demonstrate knowledge or understanding of key engineering concepts.	Not Available
Evaluation and Testing				
Students have developed a full and appropriate evaluation of the design to assess appropriate design objectives. Experimental methodology is clearly described and correctly implemented.	Students have developed an evaluation and testing plan that assesses appropriate design objectives but could be more clearly described or should be more thorough.	Evaluation and testing plan is clearly described but does not appropriately assess design objectives.	Evaluation and testing plan does not appear to have been considered but should have been.	Not Available
Inventiveness and Creativity				
Innovative or creative thinking is evident (even if the eventual design was more traditional).	Design showed some innovation and creativity. Some clever or creative components were included in the design.	Students designed a reasonable and functional product but did not appear to have gone far beyond existing approaches.	Students showed little creativity and innovation in their design.	Not Available
Team Chemistry, Interest and Passion for the Work				
Students are excited about their work and animated in their presentation.	Some students appear very involved, but others do not show the same energy.	Team puts on a good face, but goes through the motions without enthusiasm.	Students appear uncommitted or disinterested.	Not Available
Written and Visual Presentation				
Poster is clearly organized, easy to read, visually interesting. Few obvious mistakes.	Poster fairly clear, easy to read, visually interesting. Some grammar, spelling errors.	Poster is not hard to read, but is not well formatted or has significant editing errors.	Poster is poorly organized and difficult to read.	Not Available
Oral Presentation and Questions				
Students speak clearly, make eye contact, show a solid understanding of material. Answer difficult questions with ease.	Students speak clearly, make eye contact, show a solid understanding of material. Some difficulty answering questions.	Students speak clearly, make eye contact, show general understanding of material. Significant difficulty answering questions.	Students do not speak clearly or show limited understanding.	Not Available

Determining Next Steps

Improving Student Learning

PROCESS NOTES

REPORT:

Department submits a report of summary data and reflections.

Using the summary of how many students are at each level of development on each goal, the department as a whole should reflect upon what this evidence tells them about how well students are meeting the program's intellectual goals. Some of the questions a department might ask would include the following:

- Are there too many low performances or not enough high performances? In what areas are students showing strengths? In what areas are there weaknesses?
- Should we change the types of learning tasks that students are asked to complete? Do they need different or more opportunities to practice or demonstrate their level of development?
- Do we need to give students more opportunities to do high-quality work?
- Do we need to revise any of the course structures? Do we need different courses or a different mix of courses?
- If all or a significant majority of the students are excelling at a particular skill, how can we raise the bar and ask more of our students?
- Do we need additional resources or support to make the changes we have identified? Where can we find these resources?
- Who will initiate the changes? Who will implement the changes? What is our timeline?

In this way, the department can periodically examine how well its collective teaching is meeting objectives and identify changes the department might implement to better accomplish its own programmatic goals.

EXAMPLE 1: REVIEW AND REFLECTION:—THE KRESS FOUNDATION DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY

On the following page, a summary of reflections by the Department of Art History is provided, taken from an interview published in the 2007-08 edition of CTE's *Reflections From the Classroom* (p. 10–15). More information about the department's project is available on the CTE website at www.cte.ku.edu/gallery/units/artHistory/index.shtml.

PITCHING A BIG TENT: FINDING COMMONALITY WITHIN THE ART HISTORY DEPARTMENT

This excerpt is from a conversation Dan Bernstein held with Amy McNair and John Pultz in February 2008.

Dan: What we're about to do is to try to capture your experience working with your colleagues as part of the pilot project on Documenting Learning Success. What lessons did you learn?

Amy: We had to think about, basically, what do we do and what do we want students to be learning to do. We had to think about it in the most fundamental way, and I certainly hadn't thought about it in that fashion. I tend to think about content, not method, not what the underlying skills are. I actually thought that was kind of neat. For once I was putting first the notion of skills, which I do build into my courses, but it's not the first thing I think of. By being part of this project, we were compelled to think about fundamental skills, what it is that we hold in common as art historians.

John: After meeting with you, Dan, I drafted a set of goals based on a talk Amy and I had about the basic goals of teaching art history. What's interesting is that the two of us worked these out, presented them, and there was surprisingly little disagreement [in the department], only a bit on the wording of a couple goals. Rather than having a battle about what we do, we were able to say that we do different things and use the broadest terminology that we could to talk about it.

Amy: We talked about our collective effect, too. What do art history majors have when they are done going through our hands? What do they have and what should they have?

John: Early in this project, one anxiety was determining whether we were trying to do a longitudinal study of first year through fourth or fifth year students. We don't know if we are doing anything beyond this, but we were able to find richness in what we already do without having to get into something more complex. That goes back to your notion of low-hanging fruit—don't make it too complex, just go in there and do something.

Dan: The doing helps you figure out what you want to do next. Do you want to keep doing this, or will you refine it somehow in the future?

John: I think the next step is trying to get samples of students' work that focus on more advanced skills, getting faculty to identify the skills represented in their assignments, and seeing what skills show up in students' work. I think another thing would be to look at this at the same time we look at our list of methods of art history—the things we should work into our classes.

Dan: Anything that you want to comment on generally, to mention about your experience that we haven't touched on?

John: You know, each time we have gone to the faculty I have been prepared for resistance, and I have seen a bit of it at each phase. In my own mind, at times, I'm both working on this project to document learning success and resisting it, so it is tricky to help implement it. I think, for better or for worse, faculty members are incredibly independent. But whenever we've had conversations about pedagogy, they have been fruitful. We haven't always agreed, but it is exciting to have these conversations.

Improving the Assessment Process

PROCESS NOTES

For assistance with evaluating your assessment process, contact Ying Xiong
e-mail: yxiong@ku.edu
phone: 864.4112

Another type of improvement a department can make is quite often the assessment process itself. A review of the process can engage faculty members in a conversation about critical issues surrounding learning and teaching and lead to actions that improve student learning. Questions about each step of the assessment process for a department to reflect on would include:

Development of program goals

- Are there too many low-level learning goals or not enough high-level learning goals?
- Did the goals capture the most essential learning skills for our graduates to advance in their academic or professional career?

Evidence gathering process

- Did you choose appropriate courses to identify student learning evidence?
- Are the measured goals taught at the selected courses?
- Do those students involved in the assessment process represent your majors?
- Are the course assignments used appropriate for the measured goals? Are they too difficult or too easy?
- Do we offer enough learning opportunities for our students to practice and demonstrate the learning goals?

Evidence reviewing process

- Are the evaluation criteria appropriate for different levels of student performance?
- Did reviewers agree upon the descriptions of the criteria?

Feedback structure and mechanism

- Who are your target audiences? For what areas can they make decisions? (See Table 1 for examples of areas of responsibility and corresponding target audiences)
- What are the feedback mechanisms you have to feed assessment results back to your audiences?

Reviewing the usefulness of the assessment data

- Does the data help address important questions?
- Does the data generate actionable items?
- Do we need to gather additional information?

TABLE I. AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND TARGET AUDIENCES

Areas of responsibility	Target audience
Curriculum: overall course content and sequence	Department curriculum committee
Specific course content	Course instructors
Pedagogy	Course instructors
Testing, exams, and projects	Course instructors
Access to learning resources	Support units (libraries, IT department, advising, tutoring)
Out-of-class learning activities	Clubs, student organizations, student affairs
Physical facilities	Facility management
Course staffing (faculty or GTA)	Hiring committee, GTA training team, Course Coordinator
Course scheduling	Program coordinator, registrar

Reporting to Groups Outside the Department

PROCESS NOTES

All agencies ask for:

- program goals
- assessment methods/ measures
- assessment results
- discussion and use of the results

The primary purpose of program assessment is the improvement of student learning. However, most of the time, departments also need to document their assessment process in reports to groups outside of the department. Although those internal or external agencies might have specific reporting requirements on departmental assessment, they all ask for information regarding program goals, assessment methods/ measures, assessment results, and discussion and use of the results.

Using one report that can be easily adapted to meet the requirements of different reporting groups saves faculty members a lot of time and effort. On the following pages is an example of a report that can be used for program review, program assessment, regional institutional accreditation, or professional accreditation (if applicable).

For help designing a multi-use assessment report, contact Ying Xiong, CTE Documenting Learning Specialist, at yxiong@ku.edu.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PLAN AND REPORT*

Undergraduate Programs in Biology

Learning Outcomes for Majors (What should students know? What should they be able to do? How should students do so?)

Majors in Biology undergraduate programs will be able to:

1. Describe and apply basic biological information and concepts.
2. Conduct original biological research and report results orally and in writing to scientific audiences.
3. Apply ethical principles of the discipline in regard to human and animal subjects, environmental protection, use of sources, and collaboration with colleagues.

Measures and Use of Information

Assessment Methods	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Data Collection	Discussion & Use of Results
Standardized test given to all seniors. Final exams of three basic biology courses required of all majors.	X			Semester(s): Tests are administered annually by the end of fall semesters. Exams are given at the end of the semester when courses are offered. People responsible: Program coordinator, assisted by administrative staff. Course instructors of the three basic biology courses.	Data are reported to the department annually by the standardized exam committee and the instructors of the three basic courses. The department supports and encourages the instructors, takes any appropriate department-level actions, and reports meeting outcomes to dean or other body which has resources to address problems, and to those composing reports for accreditation or other external audiences. All data are reviewed as part of program review every seven years.
In senior capstone course, students complete an original scientific experiment, write it up in scientific report format, and also make an oral presentation to the class. The instructor(s) use a rubric to evaluate student work.	X	X	X	Schedule /Cycle: Reports and oral presentation are evaluated at the end of each semester by using rubrics. Sample student works are saved with student content. People Responsible: Instructors	Senior capstone instructor(s) share students' rubric scores with the department. The department takes action as above. Program review as above.

*This report is adapted from Barbara Walvoord's example in *Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education*

Assessment Methods	LO 1	LO 2	LO 3	Data Collection	Discussion & Use of Results
Alumni survey asks how well alumni/alumnae thought they learned to conduct and communicate scientific research, what aspects of the program helped them learn, and what suggestions they have for improvement in the program.	X	X	X	Schedule/Cycle: Alumni survey is conducted every 2 years. People Responsible: Program coordinator, assisted by administrative staff.	Data reviewed by department for action, as above. Program review as above.
Sample of regional employers gathered two years ago to reflect how well out majors are doing and give advice to department.	X	X	X	Schedule/Cycle: Employer focus group is conducted every 2 years. For this cycle, the focus group has been conducted in 2011. People Responsible: Program directors, program coordinators, administrative staff.	Data reviewed annually by department for action, as above.
Focus of the Year (Which Learning Outcome to Focus on This Year?): Learning Outcomes 1, 2, and 3					
Recommendations for Improving Assessment Processes: The standardized national test is costly and time-consuming to administer, has low student motivation in its current format, and its results are difficult to map to our curriculum. Committee should review usefulness of the national test.					
For Accreditation: Action Based on Assessment Results Two years ago, our advisory council of regional employers recommended that our majors had a good level of biological knowledge but needed stronger skills in actually conducting biological research. Data from the alumni survey also mentioned this problem. We instituted the required capstone course, which requires students to conduct original scientific research, and we asked instructors annually to report to the department on student research and communication skills demonstrated by their capstone projects. In three years, when several cohorts of majors have passed through the capstone, we will again survey alumni and employers to see whether student skills have increased, and we will review data from all years of the capstone projects. Capstone instructors last year reported low graphing skills in seniors; we arranged with the mathematics department for greater emphasis on graphing and better assessment of graphing in the required math course. Capstone instructors will report next year whether graphing skills are stronger. A faculty subcommittee is developing a rubric to assess graphing skills more systematically in the capstone.					
For Program Review and Program Assessment: Use of Assessment Results for Budgeting and Planning (current findings, actions, and budget/resource requests): Current Findings: Analysis of student senior capstone work, as well as senior student surveys reveal that many students are weak in graphing skills. Particularly, students choose randomly among types of graphics, rather than selecting the best for the audience and purpose; they do not provide enough information on the graph itself alone; they draw the graphics in misleading ways; they do not correctly title the graphs or label the axes of the graphs; and they do not integrate the graphic information appropriately into the text. The department would like to address this problem as its action item. Action Plan: The department has appointed a task force to take these actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search for, or construct, a diagnostic test of graphic competency that would be given to students to pinpoint their strengths and weaknesses in graphing • Investigate online, interactive graphics instruction modules that might be integrated into the curriculum. • Identify courses in which more graphic instruction, practice, feedback, and assessment could be included. • Discuss with the mathematics department how the required math courses might better provide our students with the graphic skills they need. Resources: Summer stipend for two professors to complete the first two items above. If necessary, purchase or license fees for the test or modules in the first two items above. Pizza lunch for faculty to discuss classroom strategies for helping students with graphics.					
Sample Evidence (Please attach sample student works and assessment instruments.) Three student senior capstone project papers that demonstrate three different levels of student performance (beginning, intermediate, advanced) are attached. The senior student survey questionnaires and an executive summary of the survey results are also attached.					

Resources

A: MAKING ASSESSMENT WORTHWHILE

Barbara E. Walvoord's book, *Assessment Clear and Simple*, is a straightforward guide that focuses on using carefully considered evidence to improve student learning. Some key points from the book are provided below. The book is available for check-out from the CTE faculty library.

Assessment as part of a broader initiative

A common pattern for institutions that are asked to “do assessment” is to ask every department or program to submit an assessment plan by October 15. The goal of “doing assessment” becomes an end in itself. Big mistake. Doing assessment by itself, with no link to anything else, has little reward, support, or motivation. For departments, being required to do an assessment report in a vacuum can product resentment, mere compliance, and waste of resources. **People don't want to “do assessment”; they want to realize a dream, improve what they're doing, or be excited by a new initiative.** So when you are asked to “do assessment,” link it to institutional dreams, goals, and processes that are important to the campus (p. 12).

Plan carefully for departmental collaboration in assessment

Assessment can be divisive and unnecessarily time consuming or it can be productive, inspiring, and thought-provoking for the department, helping the department to be more clear about its aims and more effective and cost efficient in achieving them. The challenge is to manage your departmental culture so as to achieve these desired outcomes. ... Before you begin any new moves in assessment, gather a group of the wisest heads in your department ... to brainstorm—not yet to make recommendations about your assessment structures but to plan how best to manage the assessment discussions you are about to have. Here is a guide for this discussion:

- What exactly is the department being asked to do and *not* asked to do about assessment, and why? How can we communicate these requirements accurately to everyone?
- Is there a difficult departmental issue we have managed well in the past that can teach us how to manage these discussions well? Is there a difficult issue we have managed badly? How can we avoid similar pitfalls?
- What fears to our department members have about assessment? Are there ways we can address those fears?
- What does each department member stand to gain from participating in assessment or at least not actively blocking it? How can we enhance those rewards? (p. 51–52)

Strengthen the department's assessment processes

As a result of analyzing your departmental assessment audit, you will generate recommendations for improving your assessment processes and structures. ... As these structures and processes become more effective, the department will feel the effects of the new information throughout all its decision making. Your primary focus should be not on onetime assessment or onetime fixes for whatever problems in learning turn up, but on building the structures and processes for ongoing assessment that yield good decision making in all areas consistently across time (p. 63).

B: DEVELOPING FRAMEWORKS

On the next few pages, you'll find an FAQ for developing frameworks, as well as an example of a framework from the Department of Psychology, which is used to evaluate students during their program.

Frequently asked questions for developing frameworks

1. How many levels should the scale contain?

It depends on your purpose ... Teachers often begin with two or three distinctions and then gradually find ways to distinguish additional levels. For frameworks to be used by multiple scorers, as in departmental or general education assessment, one school of thought holds that four levels are better than five levels, because with five levels, a large percentage of scorers may settle on the middle score of three.

2. What are the relations among levels in a scale?

One common strategy is to begin with the optimum performance as the top value and describe lower levels of performance as less than, or lacking, the qualities of the top performance. Another is to fully describe the baseline performance and then identify value-added features for the scale. A second approach is for the levels to represent different qualities (example: level 5 → student synthesizes the problem. Level 4 → student analyzes the problem).

3. What kinds of student performances can be scored by framework?

Almost any type of student performance—oral, clinical, artistic—involving higher-order thinking, creativity or integration of skills can be examined effectively with a framework. Team performances can also be examined effectively with frameworks.

4. What if the scale leads me to a score that does not feel right?

Suppose that you find yourself giving high scores to student work you find competent but somehow lacking in the originality, creativity or risk taking you want for A work. Often the problem is that you have not included in the scale all the traits you are using. Look again at the student work that makes you uneasy. Compare it with samples that score above and below it. Ask yourself these questions: *What is missing in my scale? What is most important? Try to capture that in the scale.*

5. Can frameworks be used for a portfolio?

Yes. A portfolio is defined as a collection of work by the same student completed over time. By using a portfolio instead of a single piece of work, students can be assessed by multiple works (for example, the consistency of a student across multiple situations, a broad range of student skills, or the flexibility with which the student applies principles to varying situations). Portfolios can be a collection of student work across multiple classes. Frameworks are useful to ensure consistency, as scorers must consider multiple pieces and student work may be read twice—by the original teacher for the grade and again by the portfolio scorers.

Reference

Walvoord, B.E. & Anderson, V.J. (2010). *Effective grading: A tool for learning and assessment in college*. (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Class: **Frequency teaching it:**

Faculty Name:

	Novice	Survey	Advanced	Specialty
<p>Goal 1. Acquire and update knowledge base: Students develop an understanding of psychological theories</p> <p>Students learn how to expand their knowledge base</p> <p>Please check mark the level that is expected in your class</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Students recognize psychological principles presented in course material</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Recognize distinctions between psychological principles</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Have skills to extend their knowledge base beyond provided course materials</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Students are able to describe and explain the differences between competing explanations of psychological phenomena</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students are able to search for evidence to support their arguments</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Understand how to search psychological literature base and identify scholarly work relevant to a specific domain of interest</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Students can develop novel explanations of psychological phenomena based upon reference to external evidence</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students can develop and maintain a database of current knowledge</p>
<p>These are examples of learning tasks that would facilitate goal proficiency at different levels of competency</p> <p>Please check mark the level that is expected in your class</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Students required to demonstrate familiarity with historical perspective of psychology</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students are familiar with different perspectives/theories in psychology</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Students can reference the source of their knowledge</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students required to demonstrate knowledge of differences between empirical and nonempirical sources</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Students required to describe a phenomenon from multiple perspectives</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students required to use relevant scientific search engines (e.g., Psych Info, PubMed) to find specific studies/sources related to the problem</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Students required to identify gaps in psychological knowledge</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Student required to generate his/her own research question</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Student required to demonstrate ability to operationalize theoretical question</p>
<p>Other tasks that were not listed/course examples</p>				

	Novice	Survey	Advanced	Specialty
<p>Goal 2. Understand, critically evaluate, and integrate information: Students should be able to understand, critically evaluate, organize, and integrate information (data)</p> <p>They should also be familiar with appropriate scientific means to judge the validity and reliability of information (e.g., distinguish reliable from less reliable sources)</p> <p><u>Please check mark the level that is expected in your class</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Draw conclusions from descriptions of psychological research findings <input type="checkbox"/> Recognize that there are multiple sources of information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Draw conclusions from data generated by a single source <input type="checkbox"/> Identify limitations and strengths of information sources <input type="checkbox"/> Understand when data do not support conclusions <input type="checkbox"/> Have basic knowledge of statistical methodology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Draws conclusions from data generated from multiple sources <input type="checkbox"/> Can use basic scientific means to answer a research question <input type="checkbox"/> Can use multiple information sources to generate conclusions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Can evaluate multiple sources and synthesize findings <input type="checkbox"/> Can reconcile inconsistencies and explain why some findings carry more weight than others
<p>These are examples of learning tasks that would facilitate goal proficiency at different levels of competency</p> <p><u>Please check mark the level that is expected in your class</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Students require to identify data presented in figures, text, and tables <input type="checkbox"/> Students required to understand basic concepts of reliability and validity <input type="checkbox"/> Students required to identify the source of information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Students required to identify common study designs <input type="checkbox"/> Students required to present empirical findings, in tables, figures or text <input type="checkbox"/> Students required to demonstrate knowledge of the strengths and limitations of common study designs <input type="checkbox"/> Students required to critique design of a single empirical study <input type="checkbox"/> Students required to demonstrate knowledge of most common flaws in common study designs <input type="checkbox"/> After critiquing a study, students can specify a study design that would address weaknesses <input type="checkbox"/> Students required to perform basic statistical calculations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Students required to summarize, compare/contrast findings across several studies <input type="checkbox"/> Students required to design own study to answer scientific question <input type="checkbox"/> Students required to select best statistical tool or research design to answer a specific question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Students required to evaluate two or more studies with contradictory findings, generate and justify conclusions <input type="checkbox"/> Students required to submit research for peer evaluation <input type="checkbox"/> Students required to use statistical tool to analyze "real" data
<p>Other tasks that were not listed/course examples</p>				

	Novice	Survey	Advanced	Specialty
<p>Goal 3. Address questions with objective evidence: Students should know the power, scope, strength, and limitations of scientific evidence, and aspire to use these standards ethically and where appropriate</p> <p>Please check mark the level that is expected in your class</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> State need for objective evidence; respond to questions about psychological phenomena with explicit reference to scientific method</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Understand that there are limitations to the scientific method; that there are "other ways of knowing"</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Familiar with ethical principles in scholarly research as well as historical breaches of ethics (e.g., Tuskegee experiment)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Discriminate between empirical and non-empirical claims; understand that empirical analysis supercedes personal opinion and past experience</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Can apply/identify basic ethical principles in extant research</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Understand potential sources of bias in both scholarly and non-scholarly sources</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Understand the limitations of science and can identify questions that are outside the domain of science</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Use ethical principles to design research and can recognize complex ethical problems in existing scientific research</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Student can examine problems using multiple ways of knowing and understand how those methods interact</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Student can use ethical principles to resolve complex ethical dilemmas in scientific research</p>
<p>These are examples of learning tasks that would facilitate goal proficiency at different levels of competency</p> <p>Please check mark the level that is expected in your class</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Students are required to list/identify strengths and weaknesses of different "ways of knowing"</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students required to identify basic ethical principles for scientific research</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students required to demonstrate knowledge of historical lapses in ethics</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Students required to evaluate strengths/weaknesses of the different ways of knowing (e.g., compare statements of opinion vs. testimonials vs. empirical evidence)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students required to identify basic ethical problems/dilemmas in peer reviewed scientific research</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students can differentiate among sources of knowledge (e.g., peer-reviewed journal vs. newspaper article)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Students compare and contrast competing scientific claims by judging relative quality of evidence among different empirical sources</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students required to distinguish scientific issues from issues defined by moral/values</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students required to identify complex ethical problems in peer-reviewed research</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Students required to design simple studies that specifically identify and adhere to ethical principles of research design</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students required to demonstrate knowledge of the connection between philosophy and science/ethics</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students required to work through (and resolve) complex ethical problems in research</p>
<p>Other tasks that were not listed/course examples</p>				

	Novice	Survey	Advanced	Specialty
<p>Goal 4: Articulate applications of psychological knowledge: Students should understand the basic principles and applications of psychology and articulate how these principles can be useful in their everyday lives. They should also be able to communicate these principles and applications orally and in writing.</p> <p><u>Please check mark the level that is expected in your class</u></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Know basic psychological principles and phenomena and connect them to real-life examples</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Can deconstruct a complex everyday problem in psychological terms, and identify the psychological literature(s) relevant to solving the problem</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Can apply an established psychological knowledge base (principles and phenomena) to solve a problem in everyday living (e.g., design an intervention)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Can deconstruct a complex everyday problem in psychological terms and suggest new research questions relevant to solving the problem</p>
<p>These are examples of learning tasks that would facilitate goal proficiency at different levels of competency</p> <p><u>Please check mark the level that is expected in your class</u></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Students required to generate real-life examples to illustrate specific principles</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Students can deconstruct real world problems and identify foundations in psychology or philosophy</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Students required to design an intervention in which they apply course-related knowledge in a particular domain</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Students are presented or identify real-world problem; then generate a study that would help answer that question</p>
<p>Other tasks that were not listed/course examples</p>				

C: SAMPLE DEPARTMENT PLAN

Geology Teaching Progress Tracking and Evaluation Plan (“GEO-533 PLAN”)

by Daniel Stockli with input from the Geology Teaching Progress Committee

Introduction

Discussions in the Geology department with respect to the Provost’s initiative have centered on teaching goals and skills that we would like students to acquire during their education. Geosciences are characterized by their interdisciplinary nature as well as unique concepts, such as 3-D thinking, geological times, etc. We identified a set of common skills that we would like geology students to be introduced to, acquire, and perfect during their program: 1. *3D thinking and visualization* coupled with geological mapping (i.e., the complex intersection of two spatial datasets (geology and topography) and their 2D, map-based representation); 2. *Logical geological thinking* best expressed in the concept of geological superposition of rocks in time and space; 3. Collection, distillation, interpretation and communication of scientific data through logically- and scholarly *technical* writing. We designed a plan to collect and evaluate data to track learning in these skills. A fourth area that deals more explicitly with geological time and history is currently under consideration.

Data collection plan

All student work is archived electronically by a designated person in the Geology front office. At this point, we are tracking 5+ students in 3 categories, evaluating 3 items each (hence the 533 plan). We are currently tracking students from the 300 level (initial majors) through upper level classes, through some of the 500 level capstone courses. The data collection design tried to capture work from students at the entry, intermediate and advanced (near graduation) level to more effectively track learning from first exposure to conceptually new ways of thinking all the way to proficiency.

Categories and detailed assignments for data collection:

1. 3D geological thinking and visualization (Maps): We are tracking maps from the following Geol classes: 360 (map exercise 2), 562 Structure (field trip map exercise), 561 Field Camp II (digital map). Maps from 560 Field Camp I deemed too sensitive (test area identical from year to year).
2. Logical geological thinking best expressed in the concept of geological superposition of rocks in time and space. We are tracking field exercises dealing with stratigraphic sections from Geol 360 (one measured section), 331/532 (one measured section), and 560/561 (one measured section).
3. Communication of scientific data through logically- and scholarly technical writing: written reports/papers/manuscripts from Geol 360 (final report), 532 (class paper), 561 (final report); future alternatives given complexities of electives, curricular directions: 512/541/552.

Evaluation matrix

1. Q10 – scale I-V (with definitions) – numerical output summary.
2. Initial scoring by instructor, followed by annual or semi-annual group digestion.
3. We designed the questions for easy use and hope they will help standardize grading and encourage faculty to focus on important skills, knowledge, expertise, etc. they want to convey.

Evaluation scale 1–5

1. Unsatisfactory: Significant improvement required to meet minimum expectations
2. Satisfactory: Fair but with significant shortcomings; meets minimum expectations
3. Good: Generally good work with a number of notable errors and room for improvements
4. Very good: Above the average standard but with some errors
5. Excellent: Outstanding performance with only minor errors

STUDENT:

LEVEL:

CATEGORY: A B C

YEAR:

Student Learning Evaluation: I. Geologic Maps	I	II	III	IV	V
Q1: Contacts clearly drawn and documented?					
Q2: Proper symbology use for contacts?					
Q3: Proper symbology for point observations?					
Q4: Quality and presentation of point measurements?					
Q5: All geological units labeled (consistently)?					
Q6: Proper 3D intersection with topography along strike?					
Q7: Agreement of 3D intersection and point measurements?					
Q8: Logical contact terminations?					
Q9: Consistent fault offsets along strike?					
Q10: Accuracy of point and contact information?					

More detailed questions:

1. Are contacts clearly drawn and is the type of contact well documented (e.g., fault vs. depositional)?
2. Are proper symbols used for geologic contacts (e.g., well, approximate, buried)?
3. Are point observations clearly drawn and is the type well documented by the symbology?
4. Do point measurements clearly show orientation and dip / plunge angle?
5. Are all units clearly labeled and consistent in notation?
6. Do contacts intersect topography consistently along strike?
7. Do contacts follow topography consistent with measured orientation of contacts and layering as shown by point measurements?
8. Do contacts have logical terminations?
9. Are there sufficient numbers of observations, for example, enough point measurements?
10. Do units maintain thickness (if appropriate) along strike?
11. Do faults show consistent offsets along their length?
12. Are contacts and points located within permissible tolerances reflecting the nature of the basemap?

STUDENT:

LEVEL:

CATEGORY: A B C

YEAR:

Student Learning Evaluation: II. Stratigraphic Sections	I	II	III	IV	V
Q1: Is a scale present and are observations to scale?					
Q2: Does the section reflect a weathering profile or grain size?					
Q3: Are lithologies adequately identified?					
Q4: Are sedimentary unit and subdivisions logically chosen?					
Q5: Are fossils and diagenetic features shown?					
Q6: Does the section reflect true bed thickness?					
Q7: Types of bed contacts or unconformities accurate?					
Q8: Can genetic units be recognized from the section?					
Q9: Do the descriptions truly reflect the vertical section?					
Q10: Are descriptions and graphics adequate and accurate?					

More detailed questions:

1. Is a scale present? Are the incremental thicknesses of units and cumulative thickness of the section clearly indicated?
2. Does the section properly reflect either the weathering profile or grain size?
3. Are lithologies adequately depicted in terms of lithology, grain size, sedimentary structures, bedding, thickness, sediment transport direction, including proper symbology?
4. Are lithological units chosen logically and with the intent to clarify the natural subdivision of the section?
5. Is the presence of trace and body fossils, diagenetic features properly documented and indicated?
6. Does the section reflect true bed thickness? Are measurements of strike and dip recorded, including changes of strike or dip?
7. Does the section show different types of bed contacts or unconformities? Are the relationships with underlying unit accurate?
8. Can genetic units be recognized from the section?
9. Does the accompanying description truly reflect the vertical section?
10. Are each of the descriptions and interpretations sufficiently detailed (based upon the level of the student) and accurate?

STUDENT:

LEVEL:

CATEGORY: A B C

YEAR:

Student Learning Evaluation: III. Report Writing	I	II	III	IV	V
Q1: Is the abstract an appropriate summary?					
Q2: Is subject matter appropriately introduced?					
Q3: Proper grammar and appropriate punctuation?					
Q4: Proper grammar and appropriate punctuations?					
Q5: Is writing concise, formal and non-redundant?					
Q6: Are figures and captions appropriate?					
Q7: Are all observations separated from interpretations?					
Q8: Scholarship and references appropriate?					
Q9: Is it presented science internally consistent and logical?					
Q10: Are conclusions warranted and supported?					

More detailed questions:

A. PRESENTATION:

1. Is the abstract an appropriate summary?
2. Is subject matter appropriately introduced?
3. Proper grammar and appropriate punctuation?

B. ORGANIZATION

4. Is the paper logically organized and are headings and subheadings appropriate?
5. Is writing concise? Does the writing contain inappropriate, informal language? Does paper contain ramblings and redundancies?
6. Are figures well drafted, clear, and appropriate? Are figure captions appropriate?

C. CONTENT

7. Are all observations clearly and logically separate from interpretations? Do interpretations clearly follow from observations?
8. Are references appropriate? Does the paper uphold proper scholarship in terms of credit and citations?
9. Is it presented science internally consistent and logical?
10. Are conclusions warranted and supported by the observations?

D: SAMPLE STUDENT PERMISSION FORM

STUDENT CONSENT FORM – SHARING COURSE WORK

I will randomly select several students whose work will be copied and included in an archive of student work that my department will keep for this course. That archive is important to our continued reflection on how well students are learning in our program. There are also two additional ways that I sometimes use a small portion of the archive of student work. First, I may use prior students' work as a point of comment for later students who are preparing for examinations. I post various questions and answers on a web site and invite students to comment on how well the answers address the questions. Second, I may develop a course portfolio in which I write about the quality of student performance that is generated in the course. These examples are a very important piece of my work that I show to other professors to indicate how much and how deeply students are learning. If I complete a course portfolio, it will be made available to a wider audience of professors on a public web site on teaching and learning in higher education (www.cte.ku.edu/gallery).

This form requests your consent to have your work possibly included in discussions of understanding for future students and in any versions of my writing about teaching in a portfolio. There is only a small chance your work would be randomly included in my private archive for any assignment, but I ask all students for their permission should that be the case. Note that you have the choice to have your work be anonymous or have your name be part of the work.

Please check the following designated purposes (if any) to which you give your consent:

I am willing to have copies of my coursework available so later students can use it for preparation.

I am willing to have copies of my coursework included in the department's portfolio.

I am willing to have copies of my coursework included in the public web site.

Please check one of the following:

I wish to have my name remain on any work that is used.

I wish to have my name removed on any work that is used.

Additional restrictions on the use of my texts (please specify):

Print Name _____ Date _____

Phone Number () _____ Email _____

Course Title _____ Professor _____

By signing below you give your permission that work you produce for this course may be used with the restrictions and for the purposes you indicated above. You understand that your grade is NOT connected in any way to your participation in this project, and I will not receive the list of students who have given permission to have their work shared until after I have turned in the grades for the course. Your anonymity will be maintained unless you designate otherwise. Finally, you understand that you are free to withdraw consent at any time, now or in the future, without being penalized.

Signature _____

Please address questions to: *name of faculty member, department, phone number, email.*

NOTE: For a copy of this form in Word or PDF, see www.cte.ku.edu/resources/index.shtml; look under the heading "Forms and Documents."

E: SUGGESTED READINGS

These materials can be checked out from the CTE library in 135 Budig Hall:

Banta, T. W., Lund, J. P., Black, K. E., and Oblander, F. W. (1996). *Assessment in practice: Putting principles to work on college campuses*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Bok, D. (2006). Improving the quality of undergraduate education. In *Our underachieving colleges: A candid look at how much students learn and why they should be learning more* (pp. 310-343). Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press

Stevens, D. D., and Levi, A. J. (2005). *Introduction to rubrics*. Sterling, VA: Stylus

Susie, L. (2009). *Assessing student learning: A common use guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Walvoord, B. E. (2009). *Assessment clear and simple: A practical guide for institutions, departments, and general education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Wiggins, G., and McTighe, J. (1998). What is backward design? and What is a matter of understanding? In *Understanding by design* (pp. 7-37). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall