

# Viterbo University Academic Program Assessment Framework

## I. Introduction

The central goal of the Viterbo University Academic Program Assessment Framework is to provide a structure for the continuous improvement of academic program quality. The framework is designed to accomplish two results for academic programs: 1) to gather information about the knowledge, abilities, and values of program graduates; 2) to use that information to improve teaching and learning in the program.

## II. Framework

A. Each academic program articulates:

- a mission statement that flows from the Viterbo University mission statement
- program goals
- student learning outcomes for the program (suggested maximum: 14)
- a curriculum map showing where learning outcomes tie into the courses in the curriculum and how they are developed over the entire program
- sources of assessment evidence and performance criteria for the assessments

B. As part of program assessment planning, programs should ensure that all course syllabi provide statements of student learning outcomes for the course and evidence that opportunities for learning linked to the student outcomes are incorporated in courses. Ideally, some of the student learning outcomes of any course in the program should link to program learning outcomes. Also, programs should ensure that faculty teaching courses provide students with criteria that will be used to assess their work in the course.

C. Programs are encouraged to develop a midpoint assessment. The midpoint assessment is a review at a certain point in time in the major that provides an opportunity to evaluate the student progress within the major discipline. It is an assessment designed to include components, chosen by program faculty, which allow faculty to judge progress towards program learning outcomes. Ideally, the midpoint assessment is course-embedded and receives a course grade. An individual student assessment provides the student with feedback concerning her (his) likely success as she (he) continues in the program. Collectively, midpoint assessments inform program faculty about what students are learning and not learning via the curriculum in place.

D. Programs should ensure that multiple points and types of assessment evidence are used to measure student learning outcomes:

- Direct – assignments, tests, papers, projects, portfolios
- Indirect – student surveys, graduate surveys, employer surveys, focus groups

E. Programs examine and use assessment findings annually to make changes for improvement. Programs have an eight year timetable for assessing all student learning outcomes for the program.

F. Programs must involve stakeholders and communicate with them regarding assessment initiatives. Stakeholders are students in the program, faculty, administrators, and advisory boards.

### **III. Annual Assessment Report (using TracDat system)**

Each program is responsible for continual updates of the assessment plan and results on TracDat. An annual "Assessment Plan" and "Results by Assessment Method" report will be due the third Friday in September. The report will be collected electronically via the TracDat system. The timing of the report allows for budget plans to be prepared based on program assessment action plans, following in a chronological sequence. The report will be made available to: the chair of the department in which the program is housed; the dean of the school in which the program is housed; the academic vice-president; and the office of institutional research and assessment.

The annual report will include for each outcome (see Appendix):

- Outcome
- Assessment methods, criteria, timeline, and how data will be used
- Results
- Action Plan
- Follow-up: What were the results of changes?

### **IV. Features of the Viterbo University Assessment Framework**

#### **A. It provides a learning-focused curriculum**

The framework encourages assessment that is course-embedded and thus integral to teaching and learning. The framework asks that at least some assessments take place in the form of authentic tasks (e.g. papers, reports, projects, hand-created products, performances, reflection papers, presentations, etc.) This type of assessment enhances student learning and focuses on what students know and can do. Programs and individual faculty are asked to supply students with criteria that will be used to assess their work. With performance criteria, students obtain meaningful feedback from instructors regarding the assessment results. If performance criteria are linked to a course grade, student motivation for the tasks is increased. Outcomes and performance criteria should be provided to students before learning occurs so that students know and understand faculty expectations.

The course-embedded strategy asks faculty to define explicit student learning outcomes, and from these to develop criteria for judging student performance. It asks faculty to think about student learning in three ways: What are realistic and optimal learning outcomes? What learning strategies and experiences are best employed to obtain optimal learning outcomes? What is the best method for assessing a given outcome?

#### **B. It provides the information necessary to improve program design**

Faculty in programs articulate exit competencies for graduates. For students to achieve exit competencies, systematic and deliberate choice and sequencing of curricula in a program is necessary so that students progress developmentally toward the goals. Ideally, program faculty will cooperate in designing their courses such that each fits within the overall integrated and cumulative plan for learning. The framework asks for assessments to take place in courses and/or assessments applied to the entire curriculum of a program. Both sources of data may be used in program assessment, and ultimately, drive course revision and program change.

## Academic Program Assessment Plan

A. Programs define and update continually:

- 1. Program Mission Statement:** Identify the mission statement
- 2. Program Goals:** List statements that describe what the program intends to accomplish.
- 3. Outcomes:** List student learning outcomes (what students will know, be able to do, and value) for a student graduating from the program
- 4. Curriculum map:** Identify which courses and program components will contain teaching and learning directed towards achieving specific student learning outcomes.

B. Programs define for each outcome:

- 1. Assessment methods:** Indicate assessment methods that will be used to measure the outcome *at the program level*. Examples include student-level data such as portfolios, self-assessments, focus groups; aggregated course data; capstone data; standardized exams or exam questions; and qualitative data such as alumni or employer surveys.
- 2. Criterion for Evaluation:** For each assessment method, state the criteria for success or performance indicators that will be used to determine successful achievement of each outcome. Attach rubrics if applicable.
- 3. Timeline:** Describe the timeline for data collection for each assessment method. All outcomes should be evaluated over an 8-year period.
- 4. How will Data/Results be Used:** Describe a "who/when/how" for data analysis, action planning, and follow-up. Who will be responsible for each step? When will data be collected and analyzed? How will results be acted upon?

C. Results reported for each outcome, updated at least annually:

Assessment Impact

- 1. Result:** Describe what the data analysis revealed. Include pertinent documents, tables, and spreadsheets. What program weaknesses (or strengths) were identified?
- 2. Action Plan (use of result):** What adjustments to the program were discussed and/or recommended? What are the specific changes that the program will implement based on the result? When will the results of changes be assessed?
- 3. Follow-up:** What did the follow-up reveal? Were the changes effective in resolving the weakness?