

Berea's Outcomes-Based Assessment Process

Academic Departments

Berea's outcomes assessment process is a comprehensive, three-year cycle of assessment that helps to ensure that all educational programs adhere to good assessment practices for continuous improvement while also fulfilling our obligations to SACSCOC and other external accrediting agencies. By the end of a three-year assessment cycle, Academic departments must demonstrate that they 1) have a set of measurable student learning outcomes (SLOs), 2) have assessed all those SLOs at least once during that cycle and 3) used the results of their assessments for improvements wherever such opportunities are found. This document provides an overview of Berea College's process for conducting meaningful and systematic outcomes-based assessment. The process is broken down into two categories of requirements – standing (or long-term) requirements and annual reporting requirements. Each of these are described below.

Standing Requirements

- ***Student Learning Outcomes***

Each department is responsible for identifying between four to six clear and measurable SLOs that describe specific and measurable achievements made by students as a result of successfully completing the curriculum. In cases where multiple but separate programs of study (i.e., majors) are housed within the same department, a separate set of SLOs should be maintained for each major. Departments are also expected to publish their objectives in the College Catalog and are strongly encouraged to publish them on their department's web page, as well.

- ***(Optional) Curriculum Map***

While not technically a requirement, Departments are strongly encouraged to create and maintain a curriculum map that reflects the connections between the department's curriculum and SLOs. While it's accurate to say that not every course in a curriculum needs to address an SLO, every SLO should be linked to more than one regularly offered course. Curriculum maps are strictly for internal (department-level) use only and do not need to be submitted with the Annual Assessment Report.

Annual Assessment Summary Reports (Comprised of 3 Parts):

Part A. Assessment History & Rationale

Before beginning the current year's assessment activities, departments should first document their assessment history for each objective/outcome being assessed. This section asks departments to provide context about previous assessment efforts and establishes the foundation for "closing the loop" in the assessment process.

For each outcome selected for assessment in the current year, departments should respond to three key questions:

1. When was this outcome last assessed? Departments should identify the specific academic year when the outcome was previously evaluated.
2. What did the previous results indicate? Departments should summarize the key findings from the prior assessment, including whether targets/benchmarks were met and what the data revealed about achievement of the outcome.

3. What actions were taken in response to those results? Programs should describe any specific changes, improvements, or interventions that were implemented based on the previous assessment findings.

If an outcome has never been assessed before, programs should simply indicate this is the first assessment of that particular objective and proceed directly to Part B.

This section reinforces the principle that assessment should be a continuation of prior efforts, not a fresh start each year. By documenting assessment history, departments demonstrate their practice of continuous improvement and provide the necessary context for interpreting current year results in light of past performance and interventions. This approach helps ensure that assessment can be a meaningful tool for ongoing program enhancement rather than an isolated annual exercise.

Part B. Measure(s) & Methods of Assessment

For each SLO selected to be assessed in a given year, a department should lay out a detailed plan for how it intends to assess each of those objectives. For example, you should mention when an assessment is expected take place, who is responsible for carrying out the assessment, and how the assessment will be conducted (e.g., using one or more assignments from fall term courses that address the SLO and then assessing those assignments with a rubric during the spring term.) The point is to provide as complete and accurate an understanding of the nature and appropriateness of this evidence for the SLO being assessed. Remember to always include (uploaded as attachments and/or links) any supporting materials (e.g., rubrics, surveys, institutional data, etc.) that are being used for the assessment of each objective.

The report also includes, for each objective, a pre-determined target/benchmark that describes the minimum level at which the department wants to see the respective SLO achieved. While targets/benchmarks should reflect a minimum ideal standard, it is up to each department to determine what the actual reasonable target/benchmark is for each of its objectives.

Part C. Findings/Results

For this part of the Annual Summary Report, departments are asked to report on the results of their assessments described in Part A. Information in Part B includes a full description of the results of your assessment, including any supporting data/tables/graphs /illustrations/etc. Supporting material should be uploaded as separate documents and departments should make sure that they are correctly referenced in the narratives of the Summary Report. If student work is being included as evidence, make sure that you remove all identifying information about the student.

Part D. Actions for Improvement

For this final part of the Annual Summary Report, departments are asked to report on how the results of their assessments described in Part B are being used to try to make improvements in the respective SLO. If results suggest that the SLO is being achieved at or above the desired target, the department simply notes that the outcome will continue to be monitored and reassessed at its next regular interval. However, if students' achievement of the SLO does not appear to be meeting the desired target, the department should describe at least one small but hopefully impactful change it will make to try to help students better achieve that SLO. As part

of this narrative, the department should identify when it expects to implement the change AND when it plans to reassess that SLO to see if the change had the desired effect.

Again, each narrative should include any supporting data/tables/graphs /illustrations/etc. as attachments (either as separate documents or embedded at the end of the Annual Summary Report, itself).

Part E. List of Supporting Materials/Documentation

Departments should submit all supporting materials referenced in their assessment report. Supporting materials may include rubrics, assignments (blank and completed), survey instruments, spreadsheets, or any other documentation that provides evidence for the assessment process and findings.

To streamline the submission process, departments are asked to consolidate all materials into a single document using one of two methods:

1. **Direct embedding:** Insert supporting materials directly into the assessment report template at the appropriate locations or at the end of the document.
2. **PDF compilation:** Save the completed assessment report template as a PDF document and append all supporting materials to the end of that PDF file.

This approach ensures that all assessment documentation is contained within a single, comprehensive file, making it easier for programs to organize their materials and for reviewers to access all relevant information. Departments should clearly reference each supporting material within the narrative sections of their report and ensure that all materials are properly labeled and organized for easy navigation.

Again, each narrative should include any supporting data/tables/graphs /illustrations/etc. as attachments (either as separate documents or embedded at the end of the Annual Summary Report, itself).

The completed Annual Summary Report is submitted by departments at the end of every academic year (May 31st unless otherwise specified).

Fourth-Year Departmental Review

At the conclusion of each three-year assessment cycle, departments will spend the following year engaged in a year-long review of their work in relation to broader programmatic, institutional, and/or national matters within their discipline (e.g., curriculum, staffing, resources, etc.). The specific focus of this review will be determined, in part, by the Dean of Faculty who will also determine the specific format and timeline for reports that will capture the essence of this reflective work.

The following year, departments resume with a new three-year assessment cycle and continue the process.