

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
World Class. Face to Face.

**Graduate Assessment Workshop**  
January 31, 2013

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**Welcome and Introductions**

- Pat Sturko, Associate Dean  
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- Scott Avery, Assessment Specialist  
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**What are your goals for this workshop?**

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**Purpose of the Workshop**

1. Review the Graduate School's assessment requirements
2. Discuss key components of an assessment plan
3. Share best practices for assessing student learning outcomes

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**By the end of the workshop, you will be able to ...**

1. Identify the five key elements of an assessment plan and explain why each element is important to the plan
2. Distinguish between program objectives and student learning outcomes
3. Develop well-written objectives and learning outcomes
4. Identify data to support assessment for your program or discipline

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**Assessment Requirements for Graduate and Professional Programs**

1. All programs must have an assessment plan in place that includes: a mission statement, program objectives, student learning outcomes, a process for collecting and reviewing the data, and using the results
2. All programs must document how assessment results are being used to improve student learning outcomes
3. All programs must report on their assessment progress on a regular basis with annual updates due on June 1<sup>st</sup>

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**Why do assessment?**

- 1. Institutional and program accreditation
- 2. Program improvement/improve student learning outcomes
- 3. Information for faculty/enhanced decision making
- 4. Accountability - to students, faculty, administrators, legislators, and members of the community

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**What is assessment?**

In education, the term assessment typically refers to the assessment of student learning.  
(Suskie, 2009)

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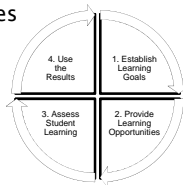
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**Assessment is a continuous process that can be visualized in four steps**

- 1. Establish clear, measureable expected outcomes of student learning
- 2. Provide learning opportunities so students can achieve the outcomes
- 3. Systematically assess student learning and analyze the data
- 4. Use the results to understand and improve student learning



*And the process begins anew ...*

(Suskie, 2009)

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**Five Key Elements of an Assessment Plan**

1. Mission statement
2. Program objectives (POs)
3. Student learning outcomes (SLOs)
4. Data collection and analysis
5. Use of assessment results

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**1. Mission Statement**

The **mission statement** describes the purpose of the program - what you are trying to accomplish.

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**1. Writing a Mission Statement**

- Should represent the purpose and/or aspirations of the program
- Should include input from faculty and program staff
- Can be written to include undergraduate and graduate degree programs or individual programs
- Can be revised to reflect changes in the department and/or degree program(s)

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### 1. Questions/Comments

- Does anyone have questions or comments about the purpose of a mission statement or how to write a mission statement?

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### 2. Program Objectives

**Program objectives** are statements about the general aims or purposes of the program that are broad, long-range intended outcomes or concepts.

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### 2. Writing Program Objectives

- Should be general and broad in scope
- Should describe one idea per objective
- Should align with mission statement and student learning outcomes
- Should include key areas of student learning (i.e., knowledge, research, intellectual skills)
- May include other areas (i.e., attract and retain high quality students, increase the visibility of the program, engage in diverse perspectives, train future educators/faculty)

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**2. Examples of Program Objectives**

- To help students acquire the specialized knowledge and critical thinking skills to be effective researchers in their chosen field
- To prepare graduates to be effective teachers in their discipline
- To equip students to follow professional and ethical standards in their field and academia

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**2. Questions/Comments**

- Does anyone have questions or comments about program objectives or how to write them?

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**3. Student Learning Outcomes**

**Student learning outcomes** describe what students are expected to know and do in specific areas defined by faculty and program staff.

The characteristic that distinguishes program objectives from learning outcomes is specificity.

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3. Benefits of Using "Smart" Student Learning Outcomes

- Guides decisions about program curriculum, research, and exams
• Informs students about how to succeed in the program; SLOs should be published online and in the student handbook
• Supports consistent and systematic assessment of student work throughout the program

Seven horizontal lines for notes.

3. Writing Student Learning Outcomes

- Should be S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely)
• Should be presented with active verbs (see Bloom's Taxonomy)
• Should align with the mission statement and objectives of the program
• Can be extended by faculty to syllabi, key assignments, and academic milestones
• Are intended to be summative

Seven horizontal lines for notes.

3. Sample Objective with Student Learning Outcomes

Objective: Students will understand the major theoretical approaches within the discipline

Students will be able to ...

1. List the major theoretical approaches of the discipline. (knowledge)
2. Describe the key theories, concepts, and issues for each of the major theoretical approaches. (comprehension)
3. Apply theoretical principles to solve real-world problems. (application)
4. Analyze the strengths and limitations of each of the major theoretical approaches for understanding specific phenomena. (analysis)
5. Combine theoretical approaches to explain complex phenomena. (synthesis)
6. Select the theoretical approach that is most applicable to a phenomenon and explain why they have selected that perspective. (evaluation)

Seven horizontal lines for notes.

### 3. Questions/Comments

- Does anyone have questions or comments about student learning outcomes or how to write them?

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### 4. Measuring Student Success

Data collection and faculty review are essential components of the assessment process.

- The process should be systematic and regular
- Faculty involvement throughout the process builds support and adds value to the data collection and analysis
- A data collection matrix can help organize and clarify the assessment process; the matrix should include learning outcomes, data sources, assessment methods, collection schedules, and expectations

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### 4. Data Collection Matrix

Learning Outcome	Data Source	Method(s) of Assessment	Data Collected	Expectations
Knowledge of field	Performance in courses	GPA in coursework	Annually	GPA of 3.0 or above
Scientific reasoning	Final thesis or dissertation defense	Advisory committee will assess rubric	Each semester	Minimum 4.0 for MS/5.0 for PhD
Oral communication skills	Final research seminar	Rubric	Each semester	Minimum 4.0 for MS/5.0 for PhD Minimum 3.0 grade
	Course grade			
Original contribution	Final thesis or dissertation defense	Rubric	At each defense	Minimum 4.0 for MS/5.0 for PhD
	Peer reviewed publications by students	Comments from reviewers	Annually	Minimum 1 pub. for MS/2 for PhD

(adapted from Crop and Soil Sciences)

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#### 4. Group Exercise

- **Activity:** Breakup into small groups. Review the statements in the worksheet and fill out the matrix.



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#### 5. Using the Results

Ultimately, for assessment to have value, the results must be available to faculty where they can be used to improve student learning and enhance decision making in the program.

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#### Questions?

Thank you for attending this workshop on graduate assessment!



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Videoconference**

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within three days of today's date:**

**[hrstraining@wsu.edu](mailto:hrstraining@wsu.edu)**

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