A Practitioner’s Guide to Program Review

2016-2017

http://www.albany.edu/assessment/prog_review.html
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Introduction to Program Review

The reviews of graduate and undergraduate programs at the University at Albany, considered essential components of the academic planning process, are being conducted on a seven-year cycle. Program review includes the preparation of a self-study document, a site visit by external reviewers, an external reviewer report, administrative and governance review of the documents and recommendations, a departmental response, and a faculty-driven plan for ongoing program improvement.

The self-study will identify strengths in your department, and areas that need attention and improvement. It will provide an opportunity for reflection on the missions of the programs in your department/school/college, and for examination of the departmental role in the University at Albany community. Assessment, however, cannot succeed as the work of any one constituency or even small group. It is a process with far-reaching implications and as such should endeavor to include program faculty, professional staff, and students as appropriate at each phase.

The purpose of this guide is to provide information and direction for the program review process, and to assist in the documentation and assessment of the program or programs. Some information is not pertinent to programs with no doctoral program or conversely to programs with master’s and doctoral programs but no undergraduate program. Where appropriate, this will be noted.

Please note that, while you can and should use your previous self-study report as a key resource in drafting your new self-study, you will need to check carefully your report against the outline in this Practitioner’s Guide at each stage of the process, for two reasons: (1) your previous report might have been missing some material, or might not have been complete or thorough in some areas; (2) both the structure and the contents of the report have changed somewhat since your previous report.

Finally, although the creation of the self-study document and the conduct of program review remain in the hands of the faculty, the office of Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness (IRPE) is a resource for information, and to provide assistance with any phase of the process.

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Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness
### Overview and Timeframe of Program Review Process (Spring Site-Visit)

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<th>Task</th>
<th>Target Dates</th>
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<td>Director of Academic Assessment (DAA) notifies departments of review, and holds orientation meeting.</td>
<td>Spring Semester 2016</td>
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<td>Department organizes working groups, makes plans for beginning to write self-study</td>
<td>Spring-Summer, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compilation of data for self-study (some provided by IRPE, some compiled by Department)</td>
<td>Summer, 2016</td>
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<td>Department submits the names and contact information for six potential external reviewers to DAA for Provost’s consideration</td>
<td>August, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department committees continue to write self-study</td>
<td>September - November, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provost approves potential external reviewers;</td>
<td>Early Fall, 2016</td>
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<td>DAA extends invitations; once reviewer slate is final, dept. chair contacts reviewers to set dates for the site visit.</td>
<td>Mid-late Fall, 2016</td>
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<td>Department submits draft of self-study document to DAA</td>
<td>November 30, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback from DAA on draft self-study given to unit</td>
<td>December 21, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAA makes travel arrangements for reviewers after seeing a complete or nearly complete self-study draft.</td>
<td>December 2016 – January 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department committees continue to revise self-study</td>
<td>December 2016 – January 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department prepares and submits final self-study document to DAA – at least 30 days prior to site visit.</td>
<td>January-February, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-study document distributed to external reviewers and administrators (Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, Dean of Graduate Studies)</td>
<td>January-February, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>External reviewer site visit</td>
<td>February – April, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>External reviewer report submitted 30 days after site visit</td>
<td>March-May, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department prepares a departmental response to the report</td>
<td>Due by October 1, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-study, external reviewer report, and departmental response are reviewed by the Academic Program Review Committee of the Council on Academic Assessment</td>
<td>Academic year following the completion of the review</td>
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Beginning the Process:

Creating a Working Group

The first step in the assessment process involves organization. Each program needs to create a working group committed to the completion of the self-study. It is recommended that the working group be comprised of tenured faculty members, non-tenured faculty, and students. It is expected, however, that the senior members of the department will take leadership roles in the working groups and in drafting the document.

Questions/Answers:

Q: Why do we need a working group?
A: First, it is important to have diverse perspectives, especially in the development of the stated mission of the department and the learning objectives associated with the programs. The more inclusive the process is, the greater the sense of ownership over the result. Second, the importance of having a working group cannot be overstated. Programs that have experienced difficulties in meeting process milestones have typically vested too much responsibility (and work) in one or just a few individuals.

Q: Do we really need undergraduate and graduate students on the working group?
A: Having students on the working group is essential. They may serve as informal validity checks on instruments being prepared to assess students, as well as generate ideas representing the student perspective. Additionally, this experience will be invaluable for graduate students entering academia, as they will likely be involved in assessment activities at their first institution.

Q: Who does what?
A: Individuals or pairs can be assigned specific areas to investigate, develop, and/or write. A senior faculty member should take the lead role in reminding group members of deadlines, providing feedback on each task, and ultimately be the lead author of the self-study. This person will be the liaison to the Director of Academic Assessment, but any member of the working group may contact the Director of Academic Assessment for feedback or assistance.

Action Steps

Identify potential members of the working group and invite them to participate in this important initiative. Once created, divide up responsibilities in terms of strengths or areas of interest. Faculty should be the leading force in terms of defining program mission, learning objectives, and detailing the curriculum. It is important that the faculty is aware of the process and be included as readers at appropriate times in the process.
Choosing External Reviewers

It is important that programs select potential external reviewers as soon as possible to ensure adequate time for review of names and planning. Usually, reviewers need to be invited at least one semester prior to the site visit.

I. Selection of Potential External Reviewers

The department Chair, or designated faculty member, solicits the names of six potential scholar-reviewers from appropriate sources (including professional associations, faculty, deans of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies, the Council of Graduate Schools, etc.). The Chair locates a detailed curriculum vitae (from a standard reference work) for each name, and after consulting with the faculty and the Dean, submits the names, contact information and CVs via email to the Director of Academic Assessment (DAA) along with a departmental ranking of the reviewers and a brief narrative describing why the potential reviewer would be an appropriate choice. (A template for providing this information is provided as Appendix A.) The names of the potential reviewers are forwarded by the DAA to the Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education, the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, and the Provost for approval. Once approval is received the DAA invites the top choices, and works down the list as necessary.

The following criteria should guide the selection of reviewers:

A) The reviewer must have experience as a faculty member in (a) similar program(s) at a comparable institutional setting.

B) Experienced reviewers with national reputations in their fields should be sought. The strong preference is for reviewers to be at the rank of “full professor.” Any exceptions should be explained when submitting the list of potential reviewer names to the DAA.

C) Ideally, each reviewer should have both a broad knowledge of the discipline as a whole, and expertise in a specialization emphasized in your program in particular.

D) Together, the reviewers should cover the most important substantive subfields and research methodologies appropriate to your discipline and to your department.

E) Reviewers should strike a balance between being familiar with the University at Albany department and its faculty, and yet being detached enough to give a critical review. Conflicts of interest must be avoided (e.g., selecting reviewers who are co-authors or co-researchers with faculty members in the department being reviewed).

F) The list of reviewers should be balanced demographically (e.g., by gender, race, ethnicity) to the extent possible.

G) One – but not both – of the reviewers may be someone who served as a reviewer during the previous cycle.

H) One – but not both – of the reviewers may be from another SUNY institution, preferably one of the other university centers.

Questions about the number of reviewers (beyond two) and whether they operate independently or as a team can be handled differently for each program, according to what seems desirable and practicable.
Gathering Data for the Self-study

Data required for the self-study are available from several sources: on line at www.albany.edu/ir, through UAlbany’s Business Intelligence (BI) system (https://analytics.albany.edu), requested through Institutional Research, or from the department or college.

In this Guide each section will highlight what information should be included at each step of the self-study and where to obtain it. The following is a summary of the required information and its source.

Section II  Program Curriculum and Design

- Course listings (department)
- Internships and service opportunities (department)
- Student societies associated with program (department)
- Peer institutions (department)

Section III  Undergraduate and Graduate Student Quality

- Number of undergraduates and graduates in the program (BI)*
- Retention and graduation rates for rising juniors (BI)
- Five-year summary of course grades in undergraduate courses (IRPE)
- Test scores of entering masters and doctoral students (IRPE)
- Number of applied, admitted, enrolled for PhD programs (IRPE)
- Time to graduation (BI)
- Awards and honors received by students (department)
- Department-level survey data for undergraduates, recent graduates and graduate students (IRPE)

Section IV  Faculty Quality

- Numeric trends in faculty, professional and clerical staff (BI, department)
- Governance information will come partly from the Senate, partly from your School or College, and partly from your own Department.
- SIRF results (IRPE)

Section V  Assessment Report

- Most recent Annual Student Learning Outcomes Activity Report, including assessment matrix, curriculum map, assessment examples, and detailed explanations of assessment results and changes made based on them (department)

Section VI  Support, Resources, and Facilities

- Budget Summary (department, Dean’s office, budget office)
- Sources of revenue and expenditures by major categories (department)
- Library holdings (library)

*All IRPE data will be provided to the self-study working group between June and August
Writing the Self-study – Outline

I. Mission and Learning Objectives of Undergraduate and Graduate Programs – state:
   A. the overarching mission of the program
   B. the goals and objectives associated with accomplishing stated mission. The goals and objectives should be stated as learning objectives in both undergraduate and graduate programs
   C. how the program’s mission coalesces with the University at Albany’s strategic goals and the President’s “Stakes on the Ground”
   D. Compare Program with Local Entities and National Standards – describe:
      1. how the program relates to and compares with other colleges and universities in the region, New York State, nationally, and internationally (include information about ratings of quality by relevant independent parties, such as the National Research Council, U.S. News and World Report, the National Science Foundation, professional societies, and others)
      2. its relation to other UAlbany programs (departments, schools, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programs, service courses received and/or provided)
      3. how the program compares with national standards in the discipline

Note: For departments with programs in addition to the typical BA/MA/Ph.D offerings, the three items above would have to be done separately for each program as appropriate.

II. Program Curriculum and Design (for each program in the Department):
   A. Program Design – describe:
      1. the design of the program requirements
      2. the program design’s logic and rationale (e.g., introductory courses, capstone courses, comprehensive exams, practicum placements, thesis/dissertation, etc.) A curriculum map (see Appendix C) should be included and discussed here.
      3. the breadth and depth of the program, including appropriateness of course offerings, course scheduling, and modes of instruction
      4. the program’s student academic advisement procedures, including how student advisement is assessed
      5. current/planned distance learning courses and/or program initiatives
      6. if applicable, the program’s contribution to the University at Albany’s general education offerings/program (this refers to UAlbany’s traditional general education program, comprised largely of lower level courses that have been approved for one or more general education category, not the new “competencies within the major” program)
   B. Undergraduate and Graduate Student Experiences in the Program – describe:
      1. internship and/or service opportunities
      2. opportunities for student/faculty interaction and collaboration (independent study, research, conference presentation, etc.)
      3. student satisfaction with various aspects of the program, as shown in surveys, focus groups, exit interviews, etc.
IV. Faculty Quality

A. Hiring Programs and Number of Faculty – describe/identify:
   1. the hiring procedures (from job description to final decision)
   2. the total number of full-time faculty, part-time faculty, and graduate teaching assistants in the program (attach an appendix with complete vita for each full-time faculty member)
   3. the numeric trends in faculty, professional and clerical staff
   4. Faculty diversity – trends in distribution by sex and race/ethnicity; also describe/discuss steps taken since the last report to strengthen diversity in the department with regards to hiring, promotion, and retention

III. Undergraduate and Graduate Student Quality

A. Program Trends – describe or provide:
   1. the undergraduate/graduate student admission and enrollment trends over the past five years (include relevant tables here)
   2. Trends in undergraduate/graduate student diversity
   3. the number of degrees awarded in the program (bachelors, master’s and doctoral level – in departments for whom certificate programs have a substantial role, you may choose to include them as appropriate) (include relevant tables here)

B. Student Success – describe:
   1. program retention and graduation rates for rising juniors for undergraduates, and for all cohorts for graduate students (from BI data -- include relevant tables here).
   2. (graduate students) discuss withdrawals (and reasons) and, for Ph.D. students, terminal master’s and leaves of absence (and reasons)
   3. student awards, honors, fellowships, conference participation and publications
   4. student placement in appropriate jobs and graduate programs (survey and exit interview data -- include relevant tables here)

C. (As applicable) Acceptance Procedures – describe:
   1. the procedures used to admit students to the program (where applicable)
   2. how these procedures compare to similar programs or to programs at like universities

D. (As applicable) Characteristics of Students – identify or indicate:
   1. the prior institutions and degrees earned by current master’s and doctoral students
   2. the test scores of enrolling master’s and doctoral students, as well as for those who applied and were admitted

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   2. the total number of full-time faculty, part-time faculty, and graduate teaching assistants in the program (attach an appendix with complete vita for each full-time faculty member)
   3. the numeric trends in faculty, professional and clerical staff
   4. Faculty diversity – trends in distribution by sex and race/ethnicity; also describe/discuss steps taken since the last report to strengthen diversity in the department with regards to hiring, promotion, and retention
B. Faculty Responsibilities – describe:

1. the responsibilities of faculty in terms of teaching load, research, committee assignments, consulting, etc. (include relevant tables here)
2. innovations in curriculum and teaching
3. recent scholarly activities, including research, successful grants, and other contributions to the field
4. service to program and to the university as a whole, as well as to the local community
5. interdisciplinary collaborations with faculty in other departments and/or institutions

C. Faculty Evidence of Successful Teaching – include and describe:

1. Grade distributions in the department – a five-year summary of course grades (A through E, S, U, and W) in 100-, 200-, 300-, and 400-level courses. (further breakdowns [e.g., between courses for majors versus those for non-majors, by class size] are encouraged but not required) (include relevant tables here)
2. Evidence of successful teaching, including SIRF results (include relevant tables here), teaching observations, teaching awards, written student evaluations, etc.

D. Tenure and Promotion Policies – describe/discuss:

1. the policies for tenure and promotion, and their relationship to the discipline
2. any recent tenure or promotion denials, and the reasons behind them
3. whether faculty “stuck” at the associate level are an issue in your department
4. any problems or concerns with current tenure and promotion policies

V. Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in the Program: Plan, Outcomes, and Uses

Note: A completed Assessment Matrix (see example in Appendix B) should be included in this section of the report; that matrix will include information from parts A-C below in brief summary form; the presence of this matrix does not obviate the necessity for addressing each of the more detailed points below.

Also note that this section has been revised since your previous review, to include only assessment of program-level student learning outcomes. Other activities, such as curriculum review, student survey and focus group results, grades, and course evaluation ratings, have been moved to other sections of the report.

A. Assessment Plan – describe/identify:

1. the appropriateness of program-level learning objectives, including explanations of any changes to learning objectives since the last program review;
2. how the program’s core courses and upper-level electives map to its learning objectives (a template for curriculum mapping is included as Appendix C);
3. the timeframe and the faculty/student involvement at each stage of the assessment plan;
4. steps taken to ensure the quality of instruments in both qualitative and quantitative approaches to assessing outcomes in the program;
5. how direct assessment instruments map onto learning objectives (where appropriate);
6. how the program involves student input in the design and implementation of its assessment activities.

B. Assessment Results – present:
1. specific examples of various types of direct assessment of student learning and instruments used to elicit the information (see Appendix F for assessment examples);
2. any results of student learning assessment activities performed in the years preceding the self-study – these should include both bottom-line numbers (e.g., numbers who met expectations and failed to meet expectations) and more detailed explanation of how those outcomes were measured or determined;
3. results of direct student learning outcomes assessment activities performed in the current year of the self-study, again, including both bottom-line numbers and detailed explanations.

C. Improvement Loop – describe or detail:
1. specific examples of ways in which the program has used the information gleaned from previous assessment activities to improve its quality;
2. how the program will use information gleaned from current or upcoming assessment activities to improve its quality;
3. plans (e.g., hard-copy reports, newsletters, postings on the departmental or University’s assessment web site, etc.) for communicating assessment plans and annual assessment activity reports describing recent activities and/or how assessment results are being used to various campus constituencies;
4. assessment activities to be performed in the coming year(s);
5. how the program will assess the effectiveness of its assessment plan.

VI. Support, Resources, and Facilities – present/describe/evaluate:
A. a three-year budget summary that differentiates sources of revenue (e.g., grants, IFR, contributions, etc.) and shows expenditures by major categories (professional staff salaries, non-professional staff salaries, equipment, supplies and expenses, temporary service, graduate assistantships and fellowships, etc.);
B. the adequacy of departmental facilities (offices, class labs, research labs, graduate assistantships and fellowships, etc.);
C. amount and types of resources and facilities needed to accommodate present and anticipated program changes/developments and/or enrollment growth;
D. the nature, extent and adequacy of library holdings and access to digital equivalents in the programs’ field (this information should be requested from the University Libraries and included as an appendix to the department's report).
VII. Conclusions

A. Present a summary of the strengths, weaknesses, and major achievements in the program.

B. Discuss any changes made in the program since the previous program review. These would include any changes made as a result of recommendations by the external reviewers, as well as other changes. This would also be the place to discuss any changes that were recommended that were not implemented, for various reasons. Note: as an alternate structure, your department may choose to address changes since the previous program review throughout the report as appropriate.

C. Comment on any discrepancies between an “ideal” and the “current,” as they were conceived and as they actually are operating.

D. Provide horizon statements describing the outlook for the future (five years and ten years out).
Writing the Self-study - Detail

Section I. Mission and Learning Objectives of Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

The working group’s first task is to define the mission of each program in the department. Many programs have stated missions somewhere, possibly in the undergraduate/graduate bulletin, departmental web-site, compact plan, or in a report written in response to an initiative. A mission statement represents the guiding principle of the program and describes in a more general way what it is “all about.” Under this general statement, the purpose of the unit, departmental strategic planning, goals for student learning in the program(s), and ways in which the unit meets the strategic goals of the University must be defined.

Questions/Answers

Q: Can we include all programs in one mission statement?
A: Because the mission and objectives of an undergraduate program, master’s, certificate, or doctoral program all differ, it is better to describe them individually.

Q: Should we worry about how the outcomes will be assessed when creating the learning objectives?
A: The learning objectives primarily come from the mission of the program. Some have found it helpful to have assessment in mind when writing the verb statements, and to use verbs that you could envision your students demonstrating.

Action Steps

The working group should revisit whatever mission statements they currently have (web, bulleted, prior mission statements, compact planning, etc.) and examine the extent to which they accurately describe the current purpose, goals, and objectives of the program as the faculty see them. The mission of the program should be further defined into specific learning objectives. Finally, describe ways in which the mission and the learning outcomes of the program fit with the Strategic Goals for the University at Albany (See Appendix D).

Relative Standing of the Program (Comparison to Local Entities & National Standards)

a) Describe how the program relates and compares with programs at other colleges and universities in the region, New York State, nationally, and internationally (including information from independent parties such as National Research Council, US News and World Report, National Science Foundation, professional societies, etc.). The rationale for choosing particular program peers should be provided as part of this section’s discussion.

b) Describe relation to other programs on this campus (departments, schools, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programs, service courses, General Education courses, received/provided).

c) Describe how the program compares with National Standards in the discipline.

Note: For departments with programs more diverse than the typical BA/MA/Ph.D offerings, these three items would have to be done separately for each program as appropriate.
For your convenience, UAlbany’s list of institutional peers and aspirational peers are listed below. Please keep in mind that while these are our institutional level peers they may not be your program level peers.

**Current Institutional peers as of August 2007**

Georgia Institute of Technology
Northern Illinois University
Old Dominion University
Binghamton University
University of Colorado at Boulder
University of Connecticut
University of Hawaii at Manoa
University of Houston at University Park
University of Vermont
University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee

**Aspirational Institutional peers as of August 2007**

University at Buffalo
Stony Brook University
University of California at Irvine, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz
University of Oregon
University of Virginia

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**Section II. Program Curriculum and Design**

In this section you are describing the academic program and the personal experiences students have while in the program.

**Question/Answer**

**Q: Why is this section so long?**

A: This section describes the program, and the experiences students have in the context of the program.

**Q: How can we keep all of these pieces together?**

A: Describe the student experience as they enter, progress, prepare to graduate, and finally graduate from the program. **First**, tell the reader what the program offers students, then explain students’ experiences in your program.

**Action Steps**

Divide this section into “families” and allow group members to write on areas in which they are most familiar. It should describe the opportunities and aspects of the program that highlight its quality. Include information on each of the areas below as applicable, and feel free to include other aspects of the program that are distinctive in the field.
Family 1: Program Design

a) Describe program requirements.
b) Explain the logic and rationale for the program design, including introductory courses, mid-level, capstone courses, comprehensive exams, licensure, and dissertation.
c) Describe breadth and depth of program, including information on appropriateness of course offerings and modes of instruction. It is not necessary to include course descriptions. These can be put in an appendix, or made available via an electronic link.
d) Describe student academic advisement procedures in the program, as well as the ways in which the departmental leadership assesses the quality and efficacy of its advisement program in its various programs.
e) Describe current/planned distance learning courses and/or program initiatives. Even if you do not currently have any distance learning or online courses, please make sure to think about any other kinds of program initiatives you have, or you are planning, and to include them in this section.

Family 2: Student Experiences

a) Describe internship and/or service opportunities for students.
b) Describe opportunities for student/faculty interaction and collaboration with students (independent study, research, conference presentations, etc.).
c) Discuss student satisfaction with various aspects of your programs, as shown in surveys, focus groups, exit interviews, etc.
d) Indicate the number of graduate assistantships and their stated responsibilities.
e) Describe any honors programs or student groups/societies associated with the program.
f) Describe graduate school preparation and career development/placement services, including results of your own exit interviews, and of our survey data.

Guidelines for Research

While conducting research to learn about student achievement and experiences is very important, it must be guided by appropriate safeguards for the research subjects. All surveys and focus group research conducted at University at Albany must be coordinated with the DAA so as to avoid conflicts with other institutional survey/research efforts. In some cases, research will need Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Before undertaking assessments that go beyond course-embedded measures, check with Institutional Research for needed approvals and support that the office may provide.

Data to Include

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course listings</td>
<td>Department, Grad, Undergrad Bulletins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internships and service opportunities</td>
<td>Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student societies associated with program</td>
<td>Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison with other UAlbany programs</td>
<td>UAlbany’s Business Intelligence (BI) system:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://analytics.albany.edu/">http://analytics.albany.edu/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of survey results, both in themselves and in comparison with the University or College/School as a whole</td>
<td>IRPE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section III. Undergraduate and Graduate Student Quality

This section describes the quality of the students entering and in the program. The information for this section comes primarily from data provided by Institutional Research. This section describes the procedures for how students are admitted to the program, the characteristics of the students when they enter the program, the number of students enrolled, and the graduation trends in the program. Also included in this section is information about student enrollment and retention.

Question/Answer

Q: How does this differ from the Program Design section?
A: The Program Design section detailed what the program offers students. Here, we are describing the students in the program. This section provides detail about “who” they are and how they are admitted to the program.

Q: Is there assessment in this section?
A: Yes, student characteristics are an indirect measure of program quality, but differ from learning outcomes assessment.

Action Steps

Start this section by describing the procedures that determine how students apply for and are admitted to the program. Second, discuss any minimum requirements and provide the following information for graduate programs: 1) prior institutions and degrees earned by master’s and doctoral students; 2) test scores of entering undergraduates, master’s and doctoral students, as applicable.

Finally, utilize data which will be gathered via the UAlbany’s Business Intelligence (BI) system and provided by IRPE (see Appendix E for instructions and table templates) that detail enrollment, and graduation trends in the program in the descriptive text for this section.

Data to Include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test scores of entering masters and doctoral students, Prior institutions of entering grad students</td>
<td>IRPE, compiled from Grad Admissions Data; Supplemented by Department as appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate admission procedures</td>
<td>Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of undergraduates and graduates in the program</td>
<td>UAlbany’s Business Intelligence (BI) system: <a href="http://analytics.albany.edu/">http://analytics.albany.edu/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate/graduate admission, enrollment and retention trends over 5 years</td>
<td><a href="http://analytics.albany.edu/">http://analytics.albany.edu/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention and graduation rates for rising juniors, Graduate Cohorts</td>
<td><a href="http://analytics.albany.edu/">http://analytics.albany.edu/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of degrees awarded</td>
<td><a href="http://analytics.albany.edu/">http://analytics.albany.edu/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to degree for graduate programs</td>
<td><a href="http://analytics.albany.edu/">http://analytics.albany.edu/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section IV. Faculty Quality

This section describes faculty scholarship, teaching, and service. This is accomplished by providing a full curriculum vita for each in an appendix to the self-study document. Vitae for part-time or adjunct faculty should also be provided, separately. In addition to including vitae, this section describes hiring procedures, scholarly activities, teaching innovations, university service, and information about tenure and promotion.

**Action Steps**

1. Describe faculty scholarship, teaching, and service that are evaluated in terms of tenure and promotion. First, describe the procedures for hiring a new faculty member in your department from job description to final decision of the person being hired. Describe tenure and promotion policies.
2. Include a chart that shows the number of current full-time and part-time faculty.
3. Summarize the responsibilities of faculty members (teaching load, research, committee assignments, consulting, etc.). Include information about service to the program, the local community, and the University at Albany.
4. Summarize teaching and recent scholarly activity in the program, highlighting products of research, successful grant applications and awards, and other contributions to the field. Include information about innovations in teaching. This section should only include recent highlights. Complete faculty CVs should be in a separate appendix.
5. Include the table of SIRF evaluations provided by IRPE, with a discussion of teaching quality in the department, including measures taken to add innovative teaching techniques, increase student engagement, and improve teaching in general. This section should also include other types of teaching assessment your program might conduct, including teaching observations and awards, etc.

**Data to include:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Numerical trends in faculty,</td>
<td><a href="http://analytics.albany.edu/">http://analytics.albany.edu/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional and staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Externally funded research</td>
<td><a href="http://www.albany.edu/research/Publications&amp;Reports.htm#MR">http://www.albany.edu/research/Publications&amp;Reports.htm#MR</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expenditures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIRF Results Table</td>
<td>IRPE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five-year summary of course grades in</td>
<td>Supplied by IRPE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>undergraduate courses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty service to the University</td>
<td>Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section V. Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in the Program: Plan, Outcomes, and Uses

In this section you are presenting evidence to show the extent to which students are learning what the program intends to teach them, the extent to which students perceive they are learning, and the extent to which students perceive the program to be effective in their academic and personal development.

Direct assessment (see Appendix F for examples) measures student learning outcomes for each of the program-level student learning objectives you included in the first section of the self-study. Somebody should be able to literally look at Learning Objective One and determine whether or not your direct outcome assessment (i.e., exams, or papers in your capstone course) measures the extent to which students are meeting the stated outcome.

At this point in UAlbany’s assessment cycle, every program has been required to have program-level learning objectives and a learning outcomes assessment plan for over ten years, and all departments undergoing program review (with the exception of new programs) are in their second cycle. This means that every department should have a fully mature assessment plan, involving direct assessment of student work products of various types to determine the extent to which students in your programs have met your program-level learning objectives.

While in your previous self-study, it was considered acceptable to include some indirect assessment of student learning objectives (most commonly surveys and focus groups), at this point in our assessment cycle, you are expected to be assessing student learning in your programs directly, not indirectly. We have retained important roles for surveys and focus groups as good measures of student satisfaction with their experiences in their programs, but at this point, survey or focus group results are not considered appropriate tools for measuring student learning outcomes and thus should not be included in this section of the report. Most particularly, while some departments have relied on surveys asking students the extent to which they feel they have gained certain skills, these types of survey results are simply self-reported perceptions of student learning, and are no longer considered appropriate measures of student learning outcomes; these need to be replaced with direct assessment of student learning.

Similarly, regular review of syllabi and student grades in key classes can be critically important parts of regular program-level curriculum review, but, as with surveys, they are measuring something other than student learning outcomes. Thus, discussion of your curriculum review activities is now placed in Section II of this report rather than in the assessment section.

It is not unusual for programs to have some difficulty getting going with the assessment plan section. If that seems to be the case, please contact the Director of Academic Assessment for assistance immediately rather than waiting until the report is due.

See also Appendix G for additional explanations and ideas for your assessment process and how to write it up.

Question/Answer

Q: How much assessment should we do?
A: That really depends on how many learning objectives you have defined and the extent to which it is reasonable to measure them.

Q: Do we have to measure everything, every year?
A: No, the idea of a plan is to carefully develop an assessment plan that over several years addresses all your learning objectives by a variety of methods in a variety of courses, looking (if appropriate) at a variety of types of student work.

Q: What about reliability and validity issues with “home grown” instruments?
A: Ideally every instrument would go through a process to ensure adequate types of validity (construct, content, and test criterion) and reliability (test-retest, inter-rater, and equivalent forms). The important thing is that your own faculty members and/or department leadership are assessment your own students’ actual work of various types with a particular eye to whether they are meeting a particular program-level student learning objective.

**Action Steps**

The first step for an undergraduate program assessment plan is to review the program mission statement and the student learning objectives, then to map the assessment tools to be used in the collection of assessment data each year to those specific objectives. Frame the introduction of this section in terms of a three-year plan.

A suggested procedure for writing good learning objectives involves the use of a two-step procedure. The first is a more general description, and the second more specific.

First, identify the overarching learning objectives students should have mastered upon completion of the program.

Second, under each outcome generate three or four action verb stems that are demonstrable and reflect the knowledge and skills students have learned as a direct result of their intellectual and personal experiences in the program. Some verb stems include: describe, apply, distinguish, evaluate, propose, judge, write, and construct.

For example (the example attempts to cut across disciplines),

**Learning Goal:** Students will understand methods of inquiry in the discipline

**Outcome #1** Students will be able to describe the differences between primary and secondary sources

**Outcome #2** Students will be able to apply tests in order to evaluate hypothesis statements

**Outcome #3** Students will be able to write the outcomes of the tests and their implications for the hypothesis statements

The second step is to identify measurement instruments. In terms of learning outcomes assessment, ask yourself, “What type of information do we need to demonstrate that our students have mastered these objectives? What do we currently do that might get at this? What class or
classes meet some of the objectives?” Then decide what forms of assessment may be done in the future to fill in the gaps.

Go to [www.albany.edu/assessment](http://www.albany.edu/assessment) and click on “disciplinary assessment” for some examples by department at other institutions.

Include any incentives provided to students by the department to participate in assessment activities.

In all types of assessment, be sure to state the specific question you are trying to answer with the data. Once you have the data, your plan should address how you will use it to improve the quality of the program. The plan should indicate future assessment activities in the academic year and beyond.

What makes a good assessment plan?

- Should be created with broad participation
- Should measure what is important to the program
- Should include well-defined measureable objectives
- Should be simple, easy to interpret, practical to implement and to adapt/ change
- Should have a realistic timeline
- Should be systematic
- Should be shared with all appropriate constituents
- Should use tools that are varied and reliable
- Should provide opportunities for faculty to review the results
- Should include opportunities to act on the results

The following are two models that may be a useful to use when creating your assessment plan

**Undergraduate Model** (based on objectives and assessment plans from several disciplines)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Objectives</th>
<th>Course or level of Assessment</th>
<th>How assessed</th>
<th>Date of Assessment</th>
<th>Noteworthy Results</th>
<th>Changes/Planned Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Students will develop proficiency in research methods: a. method 1; b. method 2</td>
<td>XYZ56 Final Research paper in capstone course</td>
<td>Instructor will keep a separate column in his/her grade book/sheet to indicate student proficiency in research methods.</td>
<td>Fall 2013 Next: Fall 2016</td>
<td>6 papers were exemplary (A) 13 were adequate (B-C) 4 showed deficiencies in research skills</td>
<td>Instructor will identify potential difficulties earlier in semester with a draft requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Research Design: Students will be able to: a. design basic studies; b. test hypotheses</td>
<td>XYZ240 XYZ321</td>
<td>Evaluated questions on exams that are particularly aligned with this objective; Evaluated a research project with a particular eye toward this objective; keep a separate column in his/her grade book/sheet</td>
<td>Spring 2014; Next: Spring 2017 Spring 2015; Next: Spring 2018</td>
<td>Exams from the class showed 24 students mastering the skills and two students failing short Most recent results show 23 of 26 students able to design basic studies &amp; 21 of 26 able to test hypotheses.</td>
<td>No changes at this time Examine other course work of 5 students having trouble with hypothesis testing with an eye toward adding more help in that area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Graduate Program Model (based on objectives and assessment plans from several disciplines)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Goals/Learning Objectives</th>
<th>Course or level of Assessment</th>
<th>How assessed</th>
<th>Date of Assessmt</th>
<th>Noteworthy Results</th>
<th>Changes/Planned Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Students will be able to conduct original research including: a) literature review; b) understand and apply an appropriate research methodology; c) place findings within an appropriate stream of the discipline</td>
<td>Dissertation</td>
<td>At or after the dissertation defense, advisors will complete a checklist for each student noting the extent to which student has met each of these goals, and give a copy of this sheet to the grad program director who will track and compile results.</td>
<td>Each semester</td>
<td>In the last 3 years, a total of 8 students defended successfully; 2 needed some substantive revisions; 1 needed some major reworking. Across the board, students had the most trouble with the methods objective.</td>
<td>The department is looking into ways to improve instruction in our methods courses, to include more useful examples, and to make our dissertation advisement more proactive with regard to methods issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Students will be familiar with: a) the breadth of the discipline; b) an advanced body of knowledge in one particular subfield within the discipline</td>
<td>XXX590</td>
<td>Results of the take-home final in the survey course. Comprehensive exam results are reviewed for evidence of high-level understanding of student’s chosen subfield – compiled by grad director</td>
<td>Fall, 2014; Next: Fall, 2017</td>
<td>Students pass comps but some wash out prior to comps and some pass on 2nd or 3rd try.</td>
<td>Course content regularly reviewed by faculty. Faculty revisiting course req to see if prep is adequate. Appropriateness of comp questions being reviewed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students will attain appropriate positions in their field after graduation</td>
<td>Alumnae survey (ind)</td>
<td>Every three years</td>
<td>80% of grads from last 5 years obtained appr positions</td>
<td>Faculty want to raise this to 90%. Will introduce field specific job hunting workshop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Students will become productive researchers in their field after graduation</td>
<td>Tracking of journal publications, conference presentations (ind) Alumnae survey (ind)</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Grads from classes 2007 and 2008 not as active as those from prior years</td>
<td>Faculty will meet early in fall to discuss findings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that the first two broad learning goals have been subdivided into more precise and measurable learning objectives since previous versions of this Guide. Also note that previous objectives 3 and 4 are actually program goals (and good ones!) but are not actually student learning objectives. These are both excellent areas for the department to track, but they have to do with student quality and student success rather than what students are learning in the program; thus, they have been dropped from the list of student learning objectives.

### Assessment Results

This section asks you to report any assessment activities that were conducted in the years prior to the self-study. Once the second cycle of program reviews is established, this section will include the Annual Assessment Report (see below). Include direct measures as well as indirect measures such as SIRF results, and other data not already included in section IIIc.

### Annual Assessment Report (due each August)

The Provost’s office requests an annual report from each college, describing their assessment activities. Each program is requested to document what activities took place in the given year,
the results and how they were used. Below is part of the template which each program should be able to complete based on its assessment plan, and ongoing assessment activities. More detailed instructions on how to fill out the template are included in Appendices B and G.

For departments that complete the reports annually, and that conduct assessment activities and report on their results each year, the assessment section of the self-study report is simply a matter of inserting the most recent annual report, along with other supplemental information about the assessment activities they have been conducting already for the last several years. For departments that do not engage in regular assessment activities, or that do not regularly report on them, trying to figure out what to put in the assessment section of the self-study is much more difficult and often ends up with a last-minute rush to demonstrate that they are doing something, anything. This generally does not work out very well – it is far better to make assessment activities, and reporting on them, a regular part of your department’s routine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Name - BA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Last program review 2008-09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Objective</th>
<th>Course or Level of Assessment</th>
<th>How Assessed</th>
<th>Date of Assessment</th>
<th>Noteworthy Results</th>
<th>Changes / Planned Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The Improvement Loop

A program enters the improvement loop when it uses the results of ongoing assessment activities to make programmatic, curricular, or instructional changes. In addition to completing the matrix, programs may want to add additional narrative that describes their assessment activities, results and improvement loop in more detail.

The improvement loop is the whole reason we engage in assessment in the first place – assessment tells you how well your students are learning in the areas you yourselves have selected as the most important areas you want them to learn. Once you know what areas are working well, you can take steps to ensure that those areas are maintained, strengthened, and even replicated in other areas of your curriculum. Conversely, once you know what areas are not working as well, you can take steps to address those deficits.

All too many departments seem to go through the motions of assessment, but never take the final, crucial, step of using assessment results to improve their curricula and their instruction. But this is the most important part of your curriculum plan! Please make sure to take the improvement loop seriously, to discuss it in your department and sub-field meetings, and to include it in your annual assessment reports and the assessment section of your self-study.
Section VI. Support, Resources, and Facilities

In this section, you should describe the state of affairs of the program. You should include the following three items:

1) present a three-year budget summary that differentiates sources of revenue and shows expenditures by major categories (professional staff salaries, non-professional staff salaries, equipment, supply and expense, temporary service, graduate assistantships and fellowships, etc.);

2) describe and evaluate the adequacy of departmental facilities (offices, class labs, research labs, graduate assistantships and fellowships, etc.);

3) suggest amounts and types of resources and facilities that are needed to accommodate present and anticipated program changes/developments and/or enrollment growth.


Question/Answer

Q: What do we do about shared resources or areas that are not so clear-cut?
A: When you can, indicate the parties sharing resources and provide the best estimate of funds utilized in your program.

Q. How specific should we be with our plans?
A. Take into account the current fiscal condition of New York higher education funding. State the resource needs realistically in terms of the direction that is reasonable for the program to pursue; then state the areas of greatest need first.

Action Steps

Identify the adequacy of the current facilities and the types of new resources desired, and rank-order them. Consult with others (purchasing, human resources, facilities, etc.,) to identify realistic estimates for each of the needs and to identify the sources of funding. Then state the impact that the potential funding would have in meeting the mission of the program and/or assisting students in meeting the learning objectives associated with the mission.

Data to include

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budget Summary</td>
<td>Sources of revenue and expenditures by major categories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library holdings</td>
<td>This information should be requested from the University Libraries subject specialist and included in the self-study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section VII. Conclusion

The conclusion section provides your department with an opportunity to review the process you have undertaken, report the strengths and weaknesses found, and present major achievements of the program. Be sure to discuss the direction of the program as it relates to how it currently stands and to where you would like to see it in the future. This could be accomplished in a series of horizon statements that envision the program in five and ten years.

Because this is the second round of program reviews, please also be sure to address what has happened in your department since the previous program review. This is where to discuss how you have addressed recommendations made by the previous set of external reviewers (alternatively, you can address these issues throughout the report in their relevant sections, if you prefer). Obviously, to the extent that lack of resources might have prevented you from addressing some recommendations, you can also discuss that here.
The External Review

Choosing External Reviewers

It is important that programs select potential external reviewers as soon as possible to ensure adequate time for review of names and planning. Usually reviewers need to be invited at least one semester prior to the site visit.

[Please see detailed instructions on reviewer selection on p. 5.]

Creating the Site Visit Itinerary

Approximately one month prior to the visit, the department Chair or designee should begin to develop the itinerary for the site visit which should be completed at least one week prior to the visit so that it can be shared with the reviewers and all local constituents. The Director of Academic Assessment will assist the program with creating the itinerary and in its distribution. Most visitations will occupy the reviewers for a full two days. The exact schedule will vary according to the department and availability of administrators, but the following meetings should be included:

A. Note that departmental leadership will generally pick up reviewers at the airport as necessary and bring them to their hotel. If scheduling allows, you may schedule a dinner meeting with the reviewers and one or more members of the departmental leadership team at this point to provide an overview of the department. The dinner time slot may be used the second night of the visit as well if necessary, for the reviewers to meet individual faculty members or a small group.

B. A brief (30 minute) meeting with the Director of Academic Assessment for a general orientation (on the morning of the first day of the review).

C. A meeting (1 hour) with the College/School Dean (and his/her professional staff, as appropriate).

D. Individual and group meetings with the department chair and program directors.

E. Meetings with individual faculty. (This should include at least some meetings with junior faculty without senior faculty present.)

F. Meetings with undergraduate and graduate students. These should NOT include any faculty or staff.

G. Working lunch with department chair and members of faculty working groups. (Lunch on day 1 of the review, for no more than 8 people, will be reimbursed by the Provost’s Office.)

H. Meeting with faculty in other departments or research centers with related programs, or with whom faculty in your Department work regularly, as appropriate.

I. Tour of appropriate support services and facilities such as the University Libraries, Academic Computing, laboratories, and research facilities.

J. Time for reviewers to meet near the end of the visit to discuss report and prepare for the summary meeting with administrators.

K. A summary meeting (1 hour) with central administration: Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education, Vice Provost and Dean for Graduate Education, Assoc. Vice Provost for Academic and Resource Planning, and the Director of Academic Assessment (at the end of the second day).
Accommodations, Transportation, and Meals

The DAA books plane or train tickets for the reviewers, in communication with the reviewers and the department chair. The DAA also makes reservations for the reviewers at a hotel close to campus. Transportation to and from the airport is arranged on an individual basis. Accommodations, plane and train fares, the honoraria of $1,000 per reviewer, as well as reviewers’ incidental expenses, are all either paid directly or reimbursed by the University, and paid from the assessment account managed by the DAA.

In addition, for the working lunch on the full day of the site visit, the Provost’s Office reimburses the department for up to eight people, including the reviewers – simply have the chair or a designee pay for the meal (usually at the Patroon Room) and submit the receipt along with a list of the names of all attendees, and a list of topics discussed at the meeting (this can be anything from a formal agenda to a simple list of topics discussed).

Unfortunately, the DAA and Provost are not able to reimburse for meals of people other than the reviewers, with the exception of the working lunch discussed in the previous paragraph. Departments are free to use their foundation accounts to reimburse members for meals related to the site visit if they would like to.

While it is common and appropriate to schedule working dinner meetings with the reviewers and various constituencies during their site visit, care should be taken not to schedule activities of a purely social or entertainment-related nature, so as to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest. For more details on the scheduling and financial logistics of the site visit, see Appendix H.

The External Reviewer Report

About one month before the visit, the reviewers will be sent various documents and links (the self-study, the link to the Undergraduate Bulletin and Graduate Bulletin, and the Guidelines for Preparation of Written Report by External Evaluators) to assist them in preparing for the review. At the same time copies of the self-study are distributed to the Dean of the College or School, the Dean and Vice Provost of Graduate Studies, the Dean and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, and the Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Resource Planning.

After the site visit the reviewers will collaboratively prepare a report that:

- evaluates the program(s) self-study document, and aspects of the program gleaned from the site visit, including strengths and weaknesses of the program, the faculty, and the students, and
- presents their recommendations.
External Reviewer Report Outline

Reviewers are asked to address the questions and topics listed below:

I. Programs
   a) Evaluate the mission and strategic plan of the programs. Is there a sense of cohesion to the programs that is logical and transparent to faculty and current and prospective students?
   b) How do the programs contribute to the field? Comment on research, program design, etc.
   c) Describe undergraduate and graduate student involvement in research, scholarship, and instruction. Is there evidence of student participation in research, professional conference presentations?
   d) What is the relationship of this program (these programs) to other undergraduate and graduate programs at the University at Albany? Consider interdisciplinary programs, service functions, joint research projects, support programs, etc.
   e) How does the program(s) compare to national trends in this discipline? Are there significant gaps in the programs’ curricula that seriously reduce their quality and utility? Are there redundant or obsolete factors?
   f) Evaluate the short-term and long-term improvement goals presented by the program(s). Are they feasible? Are the improvements likely to result in real benefits for students, faculty and the University at Albany as a whole?

II. Students
   a) Discuss the quality and performance of the programs’ students. Are admissions criteria appropriate? How does the quality of students entering this program compare with those in similar programs? Are students completing the program(s) at rates similar to comparable programs you are familiar with?
   b) Do the programs have enough students? Too many? Considering the mission and design of the programs, are graduates from the program(s) pursuing appropriate post-graduation careers and/or fields of study?

III. Faculty
   a) Evaluate the faculty in terms of training, experience, scholarly contributions, and stature in the field compared to faculty at peer or aspirational peer institutions.
   b) Assess the faculty in terms of size and qualifications for area(s) of specialization offered. What are the faculty’s areas of strength and weakness? What impact has recent staffing changes (if any) had on the program?
   c) Are there any areas within the discipline that should be better represented within the faculty to remain current in the field? Any that should be cut back on?
   d) Evaluate faculty workload and its relationship to scholarship.
   e) Discuss areas of current faculty scholarly involvement including recent publications, successful grant applications, and other professional activity. Is there evidence of continuing faculty development? Are faculty appropriately supported in teaching, research, and service roles?
   f) Report on faculty activity in generating funds for research, training, facilities and equipment, etc.
   g) Discuss the level of reliance on adjunct and support faculty and their integration into the program.
IV. Assessment

a) Discuss the extent to which the department’s program-level learning objectives are appropriate to the discipline and to the degree level. Are they specific and substantive? Are they measurable?

b) Does the department ensure their learning objectives are covered adequately in their curriculum by mapping them to appropriate courses and appropriate assignments, tests or activities within those courses?

c) Discuss the extent to which the department demonstrates regular use of appropriate, well-chosen, direct assessment of student work for each of its program-level learning objectives; do they include examples of direct assessments in their report or its appendices?

d) Does the department have a reasonable timeline for assessing each of its program-level learning objectives on a regular basis, and at appropriate levels?

e) Discuss the department’s presentation of assessment results (do they include adequate detail, background, and specificity to determine the extent to which students in their programs are successfully learning?) as well as the results themselves.

f) Discuss the extent to which the department is utilizing assessment results to improve their programs.

V. Summary

a) What are the program(s)’ major strengths and weaknesses?

b) How well has the Department responded to findings in the previous program review, both with regard to their own self-study, and to the recommendations made by the external reviewers?

c) Please provide any recommendations you might have for improvement.

d) Please speak to any factors that could improve the longevity of the program or improve its standing in external rankings within the discipline.

e) Please include any further observations that may be useful in the evaluation of this program, or to the University’s program evaluation process, itself.

The external reviewers are asked to submit the report electronically to the Director of Academic Assessment within thirty days of the site visit. Copies of the report are then forwarded to the Department Chair, School or College Dean, Program Review Committee of the Council on Academic Assessment, and made available to SUNY Central Administration, upon request to comply with periodic audits.
Concluding the Program Review Process

The Departmental Response

Once the programs have received the external reviewer report they are asked to write a Departmental Response which should be sent to the Director of Academic Assessment within 8 weeks of receiving the External Reviewer Report. There is no specified length or format for the response. Copies of the response are sent to the Director of Academic Assessment, the School or College Dean, the Dean and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, the Dean and Vice Provost of Graduate Studies, and the Council on Academic Assessment per the Procedures for the Joint Review of Undergraduate and Graduate Program.

http://www.albany.edu/assessment/Prog_rev_procedures.doc

Process review by the Academic Program Review Committee of the Council on Academic Assessment

The members of the Academic Program Review Committee will review the process and prepare a report for the Council on Academic Assessment. Their report will briefly summarize the information contained in the self-study, external reviewer report and departmental response. More importantly, it will offer suggestions for improving the program’s assessment plan, and use the program review process to bring to the CAA issues pertaining to the review process. Once adopted by the Council, the report of the Program Review Committee will be forwarded to the Chair or Director of the Program and to the Dean of the School/College.

Confidentiality

Several constituencies are interested in the program review documentation. Some of these are internal, including students, their parents, governance, and administration. Externally, SUNY Central Administration, accreditation agencies such as Middle States, and government agencies such as the State and Federal Departments of Education require information to be reported. While it is appropriate, and even necessary, to provide certain information about university programs to these parties, care must be exercised to ensure that individuals are protected from inappropriate release of information. In order to be most effective, the Program Review process must function as a formative one, assisting programs in honestly reflecting on their strengths and weaknesses with a view towards improvement, but with sufficient discretion in handling and sharing that information.

Storage of Program Review Documents

All items pertaining to the program review process (self-study, report of outside evaluators, departmental response and Summary reports for SUNY) are permanently stored electronically in the Office of the Director of Academic Assessment in Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness. All University at Albany faculty and administrators may request on-site access to these documents. In addition, all documents are stored in the “Academic Program Review Wiki,” to which only members of the Council on Academic Assessment (CAA) and it’s Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) have access, along with some members of the Graduate Academic Council (GAC) and Undergraduate Academic Council (UAC) have access. All review
documents will also be available on the Wiki to UAlbany’s accreditation reviewers during our accreditation process through the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Other persons may secure access by filing a request that specifies the documents to be examined with the Director of Academic Assessment, who shall inform the Assistant Vice President for Strategic Planning and Assessment, the Chair of the Council on Academic Assessment, and the appropriate department chair. Requests to make photocopies of these documents shall be made to the Director of Academic Assessment.

Who sees these documents?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office/ Committee</th>
<th>Document/Report</th>
<th>Self-Study</th>
<th>External reviewers’ report</th>
<th>Department’s Response to external report</th>
<th>Report written by the CAA</th>
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</table>

† Program review documents are made available upon request to the Provost, the GAC, UAC, SUNY System Administration and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.
**APPENDIX A**

**EXTERNAL REVIEWER SELECTION TEMPLATE**

**Department Name: Possible External Reviewers**

General Notes (e.g., explanation of need to balance reviewers by subfield or other factors):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dept./Dean Rank</th>
<th>Sub-Field (if applicable)*</th>
<th>Name**</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Contact (Phone, E-mail Address)</th>
<th>C.V., Home page and/or Bio Links</th>
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* If it helps ensure coverage of major subfields or methodological areas, you may choose to have two separately-ranked lists here.

** Note here if person served as a reviewer in the previous round.

Short bios and reasons for selection/ranking here (will continue onto one or more additional pages):
APPENDIX B: BLANK ASSESSMENT REPORT TEMPLATE, WITH INSTRUCTIONS & SUGGESTIONS

Department Name

Program Name (i.e., BA, or MA in xxxx)
Student Learning Outcomes Annual Report
Year or Date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Objective</th>
<th>Course or Level of Assessment</th>
<th>How Assessed</th>
<th>Date of Assessment</th>
<th>Noteworthy Results</th>
<th>Changes / Planned Changes</th>
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General Instructions for Completing the Annual Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Matrix

1. **Learning Objectives.** Please include all learning objectives, in order, including objectives not being assessed in the current year.

2. **Course or Level of Assessment.** For each learning objective, list specific classes and assignments in which assessment took place (current year or previous years). For learning objectives to be assessed the next year, please include classes and assignments in which both the previous assessment took place and in which next year’s assessments will take place.
   - If the Department conducts assessments for a given learning objective in different classes or classes of different levels in a multi-year cycle, this would be where to mention that, including details on how different classes are included.

3. **How Assessed.** This is where to include details on types of exam, essay, or other assignments assessed, and what criteria were used to determine whether students met the learning objective. It’s also good to attach examples of exam or essay questions, as well as rubrics or descriptions of criteria used to assess student work regarding the learning objective.
   - Retain this information from previous years, but for learning objectives to be assessed the next year, please also include information on how the learning objective will be assessed at that time.
   - Make sure that the current assessment (or the next year’s) also examines the impact of any changes made as a result of previous assessments.

4. **Date of Assessment.** For objectives assessed in the current year, include term and year of the current report’s assessment, and of the next planned assessment.
   - For objectives not assessed in the current year, include term and year of the most recent previous assessment, and the next planned assessment.

5. **Noteworthy Results.** Please include numeric results in some form, indicating how students performed with regard to the learning objective being assessed. At minimum, this needs to include the number of students in the assessment who met and the number who did not meet the learning objective. (Many people find the categories used for general education assessment to be useful here – exceeded expectations, met expectations, approached expectations, and failed to meet expectations – although these categories are not mandatory here as they are for general education.)
   - Narrative explanations of the results are also very helpful here, and detailed explanations can be included as an appendix rather than trying to fit everything into the cell in the matrix.
   - Where changes were made as a result of previous assessments, this section should include information of the impact of those changes. How did they work out?
• For assessments carried out in previous years, retain or expand upon results from the most recent assessment.

6. **Changes / Planned Changes.** For the current year’s assessments, include any early thoughts on what the results reported mean for departmental policies and practices. Detail which practices should remain the same, and any early thoughts on changes the Department might be considering.

• For assessments conducted in previous years, this is the most important box to fill in, yet the one most frequently neglected! Please include any thoughts on changes made as a result of the most recent assessment results for this learning objective. How are things going? How will your next assessment address how well things are going since the changes?

7. **General Note.** Assessment results need to show how students performed with regard to a specific learning objective, and only with regard to that specific learning objective. *Overall course, test, or assignment grades are almost never valid measures of student learning with regard to a specific learning objective.* While one assignment or test can often be used to assess more than one learning objective, it is critically important to keep a separate record of student performance related to each specific learning objective separate from the overall test or assignment grade.
APPENDIX C
EXAMPLE OF A CURRICULUM MAP

A “curriculum map” is a tool in which you show which courses cover each of your program-level learning objectives. Curriculum maps are thus important tools for evaluating the extent to which your curriculum covers your learning objectives; for assessment planning purposes, they are also excellent tools for helping you decide in which classes to conduct your direct assessments for each learning objective.

Developing a curriculum map is simple: just create a grid in which your core courses are on one axis and your learning objectives are on the other. Then indicate which courses cover which learning objectives. In this example, we differentiate among learning objectives that are a small focus of a course, those that are a large focus, and those that are the main focus of a course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Objective #</th>
<th>XYZ 101</th>
<th>XYZ 110</th>
<th>XYZ 249</th>
<th>XYZ 250</th>
<th>XYZ 349</th>
<th>XYZ 350</th>
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The chart above illustrates an ideal curriculum map. AT A MINIMUM, you should be able to identify which courses in your department should be meeting and assessing particular learning objectives—as illustrated below.

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<tr>
<th>Learning Objective #</th>
<th>XYZ 101</th>
<th>XYZ 110</th>
<th>XYZ 249</th>
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The benefit of laying out your departmental learning objectives into a curriculum map should be immediately clear. This curriculum map shows several problems, all of which can be addressed now that they have been identified:

- Student learning objective (SLO) #1 is covered to one extent or another in every single course.
  - This often happens when a learning objective is so obviously important that all faculty members make sure it is covered in any class they teach.
  - The solution is to coordinate among the faculty and decide which courses should drop material related to that SLO.
- SLO #5 is barely covered at all – in fact, it is just a small component of XYZ 349.
  - This often happens when an SLO was developed many years ago, and the department hasn’t revisited its SLOs since.
  - In a case like this the first question is whether the SLO is still important to the department. After all, there might be very good reasons no one is teaching about it. If the department decides it isn’t important, it should be dropped from the SLOs. If the department decides it really is important, they should take steps to ensure that it is covered more substantively in some courses.
- The two 100-level courses do a nice job of providing a broad overview, while providing a more intense focus on one learning objective each.
- The 200-level classes don’t have much to do with the program’s SLOs at all.
o Since they are core courses, that’s a problem – core courses should cover some program-level SLOs at a substantial level. In a case like this, the first question is whether the topics the courses do cover are important to the program. If not (or if they are of secondary importance) the courses should be dropped, or at least not be required. If they do cover topics of core importance, but those areas are not covered by current SLOs, this could be a great area around which to create a new SLO.

- The advantage of the top table is that one can drill down further into the data, and we see that two 400-level courses – 401 and 410 – do a nice job of balancing SLOs, with a main focus on one area and minor foci on others.
- Similarly, the capstone course, XYZ 499, has a large focus on all four active SLOs – a critical data point that would be missed in the simpler type of curriculum map.
  o This might be a bit much for any one course, but it is a capstone, after all. If one sees this pattern in any other courses, steps should be taken to focus them on fewer SLOs.

After completing the first round of curriculum mapping, the department decides to replace the old SLO 5 with a new one (covered extensively in the 200-level classes), and realign the core courses with its learning objectives as follows:

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All documents related to UAlbany’s Strategic Plan are available online at: http://www.albany.edu/strategicplan/strategic.planning.documents.shtml

Our mission

Expanding knowledge and transforming minds to shape the future of our community and our world.

Our values

**Excellence**
- We pursue performance at its highest level, across all our endeavors.

**Access**
- We are committed to enabling individuals to pursue education without limitation by economic or societal factors.

**Collaboration**
- We cultivate an environment in which we share our respective strengths to work toward common goals.

**Engagement**
- We address local to global needs through engagement with diverse communities.

**Respect**
- We value diversity, academic freedom, and the rights and dignity of individuals.

**Integrity**
- We are committed to, and expect from all, honesty, transparency, and adherence to these core values.

Our Strategic Goals

- To enhance the quality of undergraduate education at UAlbany and attract and serve a highly qualified and diverse group of students

  We will offer a competitive, high quality undergraduate education that is intellectually engaging and attractive to high-achieving students, and that offers specialized knowledge refined by research, practical, and creative experiences. Undergraduate education at UAlbany will equip students for informed and productive global citizenship, for fluency as writers and speakers, and for successful careers, professional life, graduate education, and life-long learning.

  - **Objective #1**: Create a strong sense of community among faculty, students, staff and alumni.
  - **Objective #2**: Prepare students for successful futures through strong academic advisement, career counseling, and inspirational mentoring.
  - **Objective #3**: Instill in the University at Albany community a distinctive and enduring identity through its traditions and cultures.
  - **Objective #4**: Amplify the ‘World Within Reach’ perspective through a dynamic, rich assemblage of experiences.
  - **Objective #5**: Foster a safe, healthy and intellectually open University environment that is conducive to success.
  - **Objective #6**: Provide excellent and effective student support services that enhance student satisfaction and contribute to academic and lifelong success.

1 represents an area of particular convergence with the SUNY strategic plan, *The Power of SUNY*
To advance excellence in graduate education in support of the University’s reputation, role, and stature and the preparation and competitiveness of graduates

We will offer outstanding graduate programs, maintaining and improving those already strong and enabling others to reach their potential. Graduate education at UAlbany will attract strong students, provide the preparation and support to insure successful completion, and recognize students, graduates, and faculty for their accomplishments. We will have relevant and accurate evaluative criteria and data about our graduate programs and use them to guide investment decisions. We will have policies and practices that address current and evolving needs of graduate students broadly and non-traditional graduate students specifically.

- **Objective #1**: To inform investment decisions, strengthen the program evaluation process by articulating appropriate criteria and collecting relevant and accurate data.
- **Objective #2**: Focus resources on graduate programs based on criteria of objective #1, that have reached or are poised to reach national prominence, those having the strongest potential to reach national prominence, or those (including new programs) that contribute significantly to the University’s mission.
- **Objective #3**: Attract and retain outstanding graduate students and support and prepare them appropriately.
- **Objective #4**: Develop policies, regulations, curricula, and incentives to meet the changing needs of non-traditional graduate students.
- **Objective #5**: Identify faculty pedagogical needs and enhance support for these activities in graduate education.
- **Objective #6**: More effectively integrate graduate academic programs, administration, and governance to strengthen graduate education.

To increase UAlbany’s visibility in, and resources for, advancing and disseminating knowledge, discovery, and scholarship

We will be a university where world-class research, scholarship and artistic endeavors are nurtured and flourish. Research, scholarship, and artistic endeavor at UAlbany will be supported and promoted in ways that enable it to grow, to attract external funding and recognition, and to engage students at all levels.

- **Objective #1**: Increase scholarly and creative output.
- **Objective #2**: Increase within five years RF federal funding (including collaborative PI federal flow-through funding) by at least 50%, and the proportion of faculty who have received external funding from any source by 20%.
- **Objective #3**: Improve administrative support for post-award services and create a culture of support for investigators.
- **Objective #4**: Improve infrastructure support for scholarly activities.
- **Objective #5**: Increase visibility and reputation of UAlbany scholarship in media, government and in the national and international scholarly community.
- **Objective #6**: Increase postdoctoral and student engagement in scholarship and external funding.
To add to, and reconfigure, our teaching, research, student life and support spaces in a manner compatible with our contemporary mission

We will have attractive, vibrant campuses that are inviting, accessible and navigable to students, faculty, staff and community. UAlbany campuses will include 21st century teaching, learning, living and research spaces that are sufficient to meet the needs of the university population, environmentally friendly and sustainable, and adaptable to changing needs of faculty, staff and students. Our environment will improve the quality of life of those who inhabit, work on, and visit the campuses, and provide opportunities for us to continue to grow as a community. Our campuses will be a source of pride as well as a regional engine for intellectual and economic growth.

- **Objective #1**: Create and maintain attractive and accessible places for learning, interaction, living and recreation.
- **Objective #2**: Explore emerging technologies and invest in and keep up to date IT infrastructure to support the teaching, research, service and administrative functions.
- **Objective #3**: Seek opportunities to develop the campus to allow further support of the University mission and decompress where overcrowded.
- **Objective #4**: Address deferred maintenance in order to support the campus mission and avoid unnecessary costs.
- **Objective #5**: Invest in sustainable or green infrastructure to advance the university’s sustainability agenda.

To engage diverse communities in strategic partnerships to increase public, scholarly and economic benefits

We will be a leader among research universities in strategic partnerships and engagement involving faculty, students, alumni, and local to global communities for university advancement, societal and scholarly benefit, and economic development. We will be recognized for our work to create and apply new knowledge relevant to addressing the critical issues of the 21st century. We will leverage our distinctive strengths and the competitive advantage of our strategic location in New York’s capital city to enhance our reputation, influence and impact.

- **Objective #1**: Recognizing that success in cultivating the University’s worldwide alumni community is essential and that engagement of the local community is at the heart of daily operations, ensure that University units reflect a customer-oriented, student-success-driven model.
- **Objective #2**: Increase strategic partnerships for social development and scholarly benefit in critical areas of policy and practice to develop human potential, advance health and welfare, and improve the quality of life from the local to global levels.
- **Objective #3**: Grow UAlbany as a University for all ages, at the local, regional and State levels, with a special focus on building the K-16 pipeline, life-long learning and technology-facilitated learning.
- **Objective #4**: Increase strategic public and private partnerships to advance economic development, workforce development and entrepreneurial activity.
- **Objective #5**: Create a more integrated University-wide system for community-engaged research, teaching and service.
- **Objective #6**: Be an active leader in community-building to improve the quality of life in the region and enrich faculty, student, and staff learning.

All documents related to UAlbany’s Strategic Plan are available online at:
http://www.albany.edu/strategicplan/strategic.planning.documents.shtml
APPENDIX E  
TABLE INSTRUCTIONS AND TEMPLATES

Tables for your self-study report come from a number of different sources, including directly from IRPE, from departmental sources, and from UAlbany’s Business Intelligence System. This appendix will walk you through the process.

Tables from IRPE: For the tables provided directly by IRPE, you can just copy and paste the tables directly into the report at the appropriate location. These include SIRF data, grade distributions, and graduate admissions data (GRE scores and GPAs).

Tables from BI data: To access the BI system, go to https://analytics.albany.edu and log in as you would on MyUAlbany. All department chairs and program directors should already have access to this system; if you are unable to log in, contact your dean’s office and ask to be added. Once you are logged in, look for the “dashboards” pulldown menu at the top of the screen toward the right hand side. Click on the word “dashboards,” and you will see a number of options, including “UAlbany Program Review Dashboard.” Select that.

The first table that comes up is labeled “1a. Enrollment.” For each program or degree level for which you want to produce a table, follow these steps:

- Under “Term Descr,” select Fall Terms, generally the last five or seven years, but not including the Fall Term in which you are writing the report, as the data for that will still be in flux.
- After that, make the appropriate combination of selections from the next three fields, “Acad Career,” “Acad Plan Type,” and “Degree Level Descr.”
- Next, if your department has only one degree at each level, you can just select your department under “Department Name;” if you have multiple programs at the same level, you’ll need to separately select the individual program under “Acad Program Descr.”
- Click “apply” on the lower left to produce your table.
- Click the “export” button lower right, and select “excel” (whichever of the two version you prefer). Open the excel spreadsheet, and you will have a table you can copy and paste right into your report.
- Please add a row at the bottom and add the 5-year or 7-year average; format to taste.
- Repeat as necessary for additional programs in your department. The resulting table will look like this:

Table 1a. BA Program Enrollment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term Descr</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Total Department Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department count</td>
<td>Department count</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2009</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2010</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2014</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2015</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-Year Average</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Follow the same process for other tables below that have “BI” listed as their source.
Table 2. (Source: Graduate Admissions Office via IRPE)
Admission Trends for MA Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Applied</th>
<th>Admitted</th>
<th>% Admitted</th>
<th>Enrolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-year ave.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. (Source: Graduate Admissions Office via IRPE)
GPA and GRE Scores for Applicants, Admits, and Enrolled Students in Master's Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applied</th>
<th>Admitted</th>
<th>Enrolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>GRE</td>
<td>GPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-year ave.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. (Source: Graduate Admissions Office via IRPE)
GPA and GRE Scores for Applicants, Admits, and Enrolled Students in Ph.D. Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applied</th>
<th>Admitted</th>
<th>Enrolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>GRE</td>
<td>GPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-year ave.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ASSESSMENT EXAMPLES

Types of Assessment

Direct Assessment of Learning Outcomes – the following could be considered direct assessments of learning outcomes, if the products are reflective of specific learning objectives defined in the first section Missions and Learning Outcomes in Undergraduate and Graduate Programs.

In this list, where we refer to “elements of” or “items on,” we are referring to the principle that it is generally not the whole of the listed test, portfolio, exam, etc., in which we assess student learning outcomes with regard to a particular program-level learning objective, but rather elements of that test, portfolio, exam, etc., that are specifically related to that individual learning objective.

   a) Elements of student work in capstone courses.
   b) Elements of student portfolios.
   c) ETS/GRE items.
   d) Items on pre-test, post-test program exams.
   e) Items on licensure exam items.
   f) Elements of performances and presentations.
   g) Elements of comprehensive examinations.
   h) Elements of Master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation.

Indirect Assessment of Learning Outcomes – in the first round of the program review cycle, it was understood that some programs would have trouble developing a full range of direct assessment tools for each of their program-level learning objectives. As a result, during that cycle the items discussed below were often discussed in lieu of direct assessment of learning outcomes, but even then, that was only the case if the data collected reflected students or employer perceptions of the extent to which they have met specific learning outcomes defined in the first section.

At this point, well into the second round of the review cycle, every department should have had plenty of time to develop a full range of direct assessment tools for each of its program-level learning objectives. Thus, the department should be relying exclusively on direct assessment of student learning outcomes; indirect assessment tools should only be used in special cases, in which direct assessment is either impossible or extremely difficult.

While indirect assessment tools are not appropriate for assessing student learning outcomes, they are often very appropriate for assessing or evaluating other elements of your programs. For example:

Indirect Assessment of Program Curricula (but not student learning outcomes).

   a) Curriculum mapping, in which core courses and electives are mapped with program-level student learning objectives to determine whether all learning objectives are covered adequately (see Appendix C). This tool can also be used to determine if some objectives might be covered in too many courses, and to determine if some courses are covering other areas of importance, but not the existing program-level learning
objectives. In this sort of case, it can identify areas in which the department should either consider adding a learning objective, or should re-align course content with existing learning objectives.

b) Syllabus review, in which syllabi from core courses and key electives are reviewed regularly to ensure they are remaining true to the program’s goals, missions and learning objectives.

c) In graduate programs, regular review of the content of, and student performance in, comprehensive exams is often one of the most important tools for evaluating the extent to which course content is aligned with program missions, goals and objectives. Many departments (especially smaller ones) also regularly discuss overall performance of individual graduate students to ensure the effectiveness of the curriculum.

*Indirect Assessment of Missions and Professional Outcomes in Undergraduate and Graduate Programs (but not student learning outcomes).*

d) Surveys of students in their graduating year/semester, including the Student Experience Survey administered by Institutional Research.

e) Focus groups or interviews with undergraduate/graduate students.

f) Alumni surveys.

g) Alumni placements in graduate school/career (if stated as learning outcome).

h) Employer surveys.

*Indirect Assessment of Program Effectiveness and/or Student Satisfaction (but not student learning outcomes)* – the following are examples of indirect assessment of program effectiveness and/or satisfaction, but typically should not be considered assessment of learning outcomes.

a) Program retention and program graduation rates.

b) Surveys of current students and/or alumni.

c) Alumni placements in graduate school/career.

d) Focus groups or interviews of current students and/or alumni.

e) Time to undergraduate/graduate degree.

f) Author/co-authorship of referred journal article.

gh) Conference presentations.

h) Service and contribution to the program and field on behalf of the program.

i) Participation in program honors programs and/or societies.

j) Awards and honors.

Note: These are examples, but by no means does this list represent all methods of assessment. See Maki (2002) and more applied assessment models at [www.albany.edu/assessment](http://www.albany.edu/assessment) click on disciplinary assessment and select your respective program.
APPENDIX G: JUNE 2015 MEMORANDUM ON ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

To: Deans, Department Chairs & Program Directors
From: Joel Bloom, Director of Academic Assessment & Survey Research,
Steven Doellefeld, Associate Director of Academic Assessment
Date: June, 2015
Re: Student Learning Outcome Reports

Enclosed, please find feedback on your annual 2013-14 Student Learning Outcome Report. When looked at from a macro view, it very heartening to see a great deal of truly excellent, creative assessment activity is going on across the campus, using a wide variety of methods. These activities help us ensure that the courses we teach support the curricula we design, and that students are actually learning what we hope they are learning. As you look at our program-specific feedback, please keep in mind that, as we have said previously, we can certainly act as a sounding board, or provide our perspectives and perhaps a new perspectives, perspective on the assessments you are doing in your programs, but we also know we don’t have all the answers. We hope you will take our program-level suggestions in that light.

In addition to our feedback on your 2013-2014 Student Learning Outcome Reports, we are attaching a few documents that might be helpful as we continue our ongoing process of improving assessment at UAlbany:

(1) a set of ideas for creating helpful and practical learning objectives;
(2) examples of a well-designed assessment plan;
(3) an assessment rubric for evaluating the quality of your assessment plan;
(4) a blank assessment matrix with instructions/suggestions on what to include in each section;
(5) an example of how you can map your program-level learning objectives to the core courses in your curriculum (a curriculum map).

All these attachments provide additional context to what we say below and in my feedback to your program.

We also want to take this opportunity to highlight a few important themes we have noted in the course of reviewing the assessment reports from across the University. In each of the areas below, many departments are already doing excellent work, and serve as models of highly developed assessment plans.

• “Learning Objectives” vs. “Learning Outcomes”: For purposes of these reports, a “student learning objective” means something you want students to learn by the time they finish your program – it’s about goals; a “student learning outcome,” on the other hand, means a measured assessment result in which you have determined the extent to which students have actually demonstrated that they have met your learning objectives – it’s about results. Thus, your annual student learning outcomes assessment reports should show your learning outcomes (actual assessment results) for each learning objective (goal) assessed.

• Program-Level vs. Course-Level Learning Objectives: Each course in your department has a variety of goals and objectives for what the instructor wants students to learn by the end of the semester. Each course will have at least some coverage of one or more program-level learning objectives, but will also have course-level learning objectives that are particular just to that course or that instructor. Your annual student learning outcomes report is only about program-level learning objectives, not course-level learning objectives.

• Learning Objectives Are About Learning: If they are about other things, they are still program goals or objectives; they just aren’t learning objectives. For example, objectives about how much Ph.D. students will publish, what kinds of jobs they will have, or what you expect their contributions to the field will be, are not – by definition – learning objectives. They may be program goals, but they are not about what students will learn. Learning objectives focus on what your students learn in your program, not their career or success after graduation. Measurement of post-degree career success can...
be an important part of the department’s overall assessment plan (and is already a key metric for graduate programs), but it should not be part of your student learning outcomes assessment.

- **Learning Objectives: General Tips:** Learning objectives should be specific enough to represent discrete, measurable goals, but not as specific as a learning objective for a class. In practice, UAlbany programs range from a low of two to a high of over 20 program learning objectives. Clearly two are too few (some programs have one learning objective that encompasses their entire discipline!) and 20+ are too many; the key is to craft measurable learning objectives that match your program’s mission and goals. If your program has only two or three objectives, you can easily break them down into component parts. (Several programs have a very good system in which they have a few broad learning goals, each with several more precise and measurable learning objectives below them.) For example, if one objective states that students should be able to conduct an independent research project, don’t just look at the grades of a research paper – break the research process (and paper) into its key component parts and assess those separately.

- **Poorly Written Learning Objectives → Useless Assessment:** The whole point of assessment is to obtain information you can use to improve your program. When you have overly inclusive or vague learning objectives, even when you try to assess student learning you will not learn anything of value. For example, some graduate programs have a learning objective that is essentially the entire discipline; since the comprehensive exam or capstone course covers the entire discipline, a pass for the exam or the course proves that students are meeting the objective. While that’s technically true, it tells you nothing of any value because there are so many different ways in which a student can get a “B” in a capstone course or a “pass” on a comprehensive examination. For clues as to what you can use for more specific (and useful) learning objectives, a good place to start would be to look at the exam questions and capstone syllabi. As another example, some Ph.D. programs have a learning objective that essentially is the dissertation, and the “assessment” is simply a listing of the numbers of students whose dissertations were approved. Again, that doesn’t tell you anything useful about which areas your students are excelling in and in which areas they need more work. In designing learning objectives it’s better to break the dissertation down into component parts (the items that students are demonstrating they know how to do when they complete a dissertation) and then assess separately the extent to which they are meeting the objectives in each of these component parts – *that’s what will provide you with useful information*. The good news is that you are very much on the right track – capstone courses, comprehensive examinations and dissertations are excellent points for assessing learning objectives, but the learning objectives need to be specific and the assessment needs to be systematic and focused (rubrics are one way, but not the only way of achieving the latter goal) to enable you to learn useful information about how students are doing in your program.

- **Assessment Unrelated to Learning Outcomes.** Many programs rely heavily on indirect assessment methods such as surveys and syllabus reviews. Both are important tools for other purposes, but neither measure student learning outcomes. For example, a syllabus review assesses curriculum design, not what students have actually learned. Similarly, most surveys measure student experiences and opinions, not student learning – again, they are an important part of your overall assessment plan, but they are not related to *student learning outcomes assessment*. (Also, per UAlbany policy, please make sure to coordinate with Joel regarding timing and content of any surveys so they do not run up against other important and ongoing institutional surveys (see attached policy memorandum, below). Occasionally we do see a survey that really does attempt to measure student learning outcomes – for example, by asking students what they have learned, in a way that maps to individual student learning objectives. If you have a survey that meets this description, do include that in your report, but also please keep in mind that self-reported learning on a survey is never as reliable as externally assessed learning – so any indirect assessment tools should be matched elsewhere in your cycle with direct assessment tools. All assessment should be done systematically, with clear links between the assessment tools, assessment outcomes and specific learning objectives.
• **Grades are Not Assessment:** Some departments are still over-relying on grades on assignments or courses, or pass/no pass on comprehensive examinations or dissertations with little or no additional effort to match that work with specific learning objectives. *Grades alone provide your program with no useable information* as to what specifically students are learning or not learning or in suggesting areas on which the program can improve. Course grades are almost always based on a wide variety of factors, some of which are related to program-level learning objectives and some of which are not (the latter might include additional course-level learning objectives as well as factors such as participation, attendance, and even late penalties); additionally, most courses cover more than one program-level learning objective to one extent or another – if you only look at the course grade as a whole, you will not be able to determine how students are performing with regard to any individual learning objective. Even individual assignment grades almost always include factors unrelated to any one learning objective.

• **Direct Assessment.** At this point – ten years or more into UAlbany’s Institutional Assessment Plan – if you are not already doing so, you really need to be assessing student learning directly by looking at the work your students produce and assessing the extent to which those pieces of work demonstrate or fail to demonstrate that they are meeting your learning objectives. *Direct assessment activities measure actual student learning outcomes for a particular learning objective (not for all learning objectives at once!), by assessing actual examples of student work.* Most departments at UAlbany engage in at least some direct assessment – with wide varieties of methods including pre/post knowledge tests, matching final examination questions to learning objectives and aggregating the results for each student, using rubrics to assess assignments, supervisor evaluations and portfolio review, among others.

• **Timeline: A Reasonable Cycle.** While smaller programs, and most Ph.D. programs, will often need to conduct their assessments continuously (for example, by assessing students’ work on their comprehensive exams, dissertations or capstone courses on an ongoing basis), larger programs and most undergraduate programs should conduct their assessments over a reasonable multi-year cycle. This will help you conduct more focused assessments every few years rather than shallow assessments every year (or no assessments at all, as often happens when reality intervenes). While there is no absolute best practice for how often you should assess each learning objective, a good general rule of thumb is that you should try to create a cycle that will enable you to assess each learning objective twice during the course of your 7-year program review cycle. This will give you a chance to make changes based on the external review, assess those changes, and then make additional improvements in time for your next review.

• **What about the Competencies within the Major?** At this point, no final decisions have been made with regard to how assessment should be done for the competencies within the undergraduate majors. For the time being, you do not need to include these in your student learning outcomes assessment reports. We will keep you posted!

Thanks for all your great work – we look forward to seeing your 2014-2015 reports soon, and we promise we’ll get you your feedback on them in a more timely fashion this time around.