



Assessment Overview for Academic Programs

 **Syracuse University**
Institutional Effectiveness (IE)
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Syracuse University's Assessment Framework

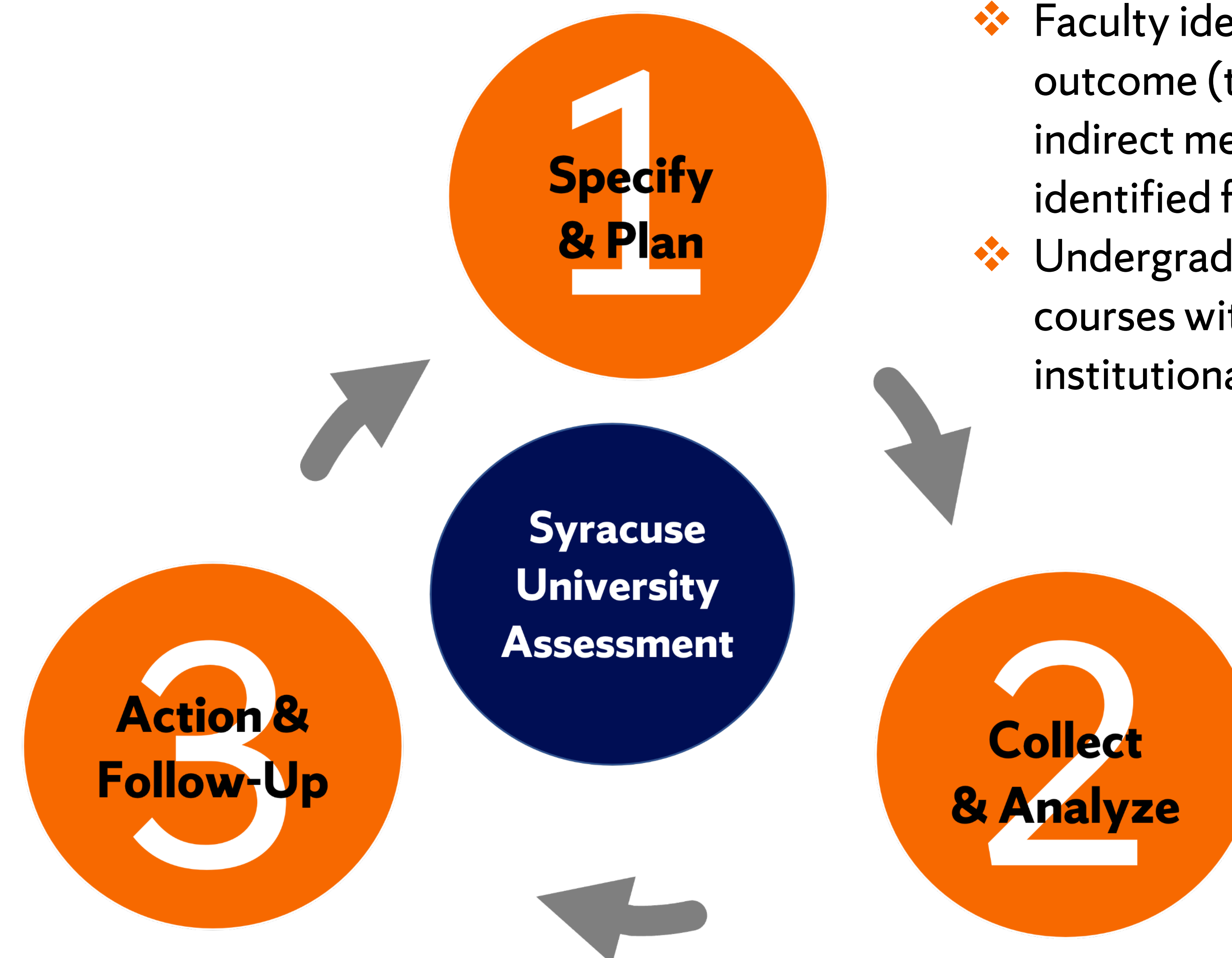
The process for conducting student learning outcomes assessment at the academic program level is organized into three phases:

Sustaining Assessment

- ❖ Faculty members lead and sustain a well-designed and manageable academic program assessment and action plan to inform decision-making.
- ❖ The entire set of student learning outcomes are assessed at least once in the University's four-year cycle with updates provided annually.

Phase 1 | Specify and Plan

- ❖ The academic program has clear statements of essential learning outcomes that describe what students will be able to do, know, or produce over time as a result of participation in the academic program.
- ❖ The academic program's curriculum map demonstrates the full progression of learning across the curriculum using the institutional scale.
- ❖ Faculty identify at least two measures for each student learning outcome (two direct measures or one direct measure and one indirect measure). A specific target, or criterion for success, is identified for each measure.
- ❖ Undergraduate programs align student learning outcomes and courses with the Shared Competencies, Syracuse University's institutional learning goals.



Phase 3 | Action and Follow-Up

- ❖ Assessment results inform faculty decisions about the academic program. Based on the findings, faculty members suggest and implement actions to improve student learning and program operations.
- ❖ Faculty conduct follow-up assessment to examine the impact of actions taken.

Phase 2 | Collect and Analyze

- ❖ During the academic year, evidence of student learning is gathered through direct measures, which are often embedded in courses (e.g., student papers, projects, exam questions, performances). They are supported by indirect measures, such as those that ask students to share perceptions of their learning and experiences in the program.
- ❖ Results are documented and consistent with all measures and criteria for each learning outcome being assessed in the academic year.
- ❖ Faculty's interpretation of the results is comprehensively documented and summarizes the strengths and weaknesses found in student learning and program operations.

Roles in a Collaborative Assessment Process

Deans

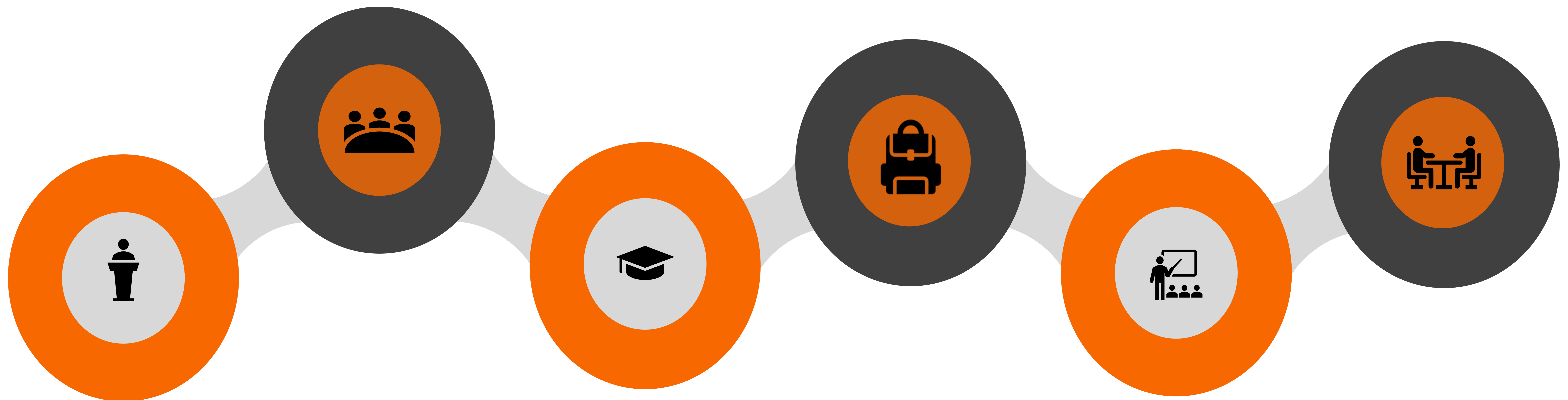
- ❖ Communicate the value of evidence-based decision-making to enhance student learning and operations in the school/college.
- ❖ Establish resources to sustain the school/college's commitment to ongoing improvement.
- ❖ Form and maintain a school/college-wide committee responsible for learning outcome assessment (can be the curriculum committee).
- ❖ Incorporate success outcomes that are meaningful to the school/college operations and environment into the dean's office assessment and action plan and act on findings.

Faculty

- ❖ Lead and collectively implement the academic program's assessment and action plan including establishing learning outcomes, mapping the curriculum to the outcomes, collecting student work and data, discussing results, and acting on the findings.
- ❖ When requested, provide evidence from course-level measures.
- ❖ Communicate program learning outcomes and course learning objectives to students.
- ❖ Empower students to be agents of their own learning by engaging them in the assessment process (e.g., surveying or discussing their learning and experiences in the program, reflecting on the relevancy of learning outcomes, analyzing and interpreting collected data).

Educational Effectiveness Committee and Institutional Effectiveness Committee

- ❖ Representatives communicate information shared at the committee with program/unit/division leaders to guide actions that support and enhance the student experience and campus operations.
- ❖ Monitor assessment and accreditation activities in the program/unit/division and point leaders to appropriate University resources as needed.
- ❖ Identify strengths and limitations of current assessment practices in the program/unit/division and share insights with the committees.



Chairs & Directors

- ❖ Designate a faculty member (e.g., program coordinator, undergraduate director, graduate director) or faculty group to lead each program's assessment and action plan implementation
- ❖ Ensure that faculty participate in collaborative discussions about program-level learning and share responsibility for systematically collecting and reflecting on evidence to support student development and achievement.
- ❖ Align courses and program learning outcomes with department and institutional goals.

Students

- ❖ Engage in assessment-related activities that allow them to share their perspectives and experiences (e.g., surveys, course feedback, focus groups).
- ❖ Provide constructive feedback and input on assessment activities (e.g., co-creating/revising learning outcomes, assisting with rubric development, analyzing and interpreting data).
- ❖ Serve on school/college, department, or program committees when requested.
- ❖ Discuss learning, experiences in the program in relation to the learning outcomes.

Staff

- ❖ Provide support to faculty as they examine student learning in the academic programs.
- ❖ Support may include collecting student work and other data for faculty to review, coordinating meetings for faculty to discuss student work, or preparing meeting minutes.

Equity-Minded Practices in Assessment

“Assessment, if not done with equity in mind, privileges and validates certain types of learning and evidence of learning over others, can hinder the validation of multiple means of demonstration, and can reinforce within students the false notion that they do not belong in higher education” (Jankowski & Montenegro, 2017, p.5).

What does a focus on equity entail?

Check	Use	Include	Increase	Ensure	Make
Check biases and ask reflective questions throughout the data analysis process to address assumptions and positions of privilege	Use multiple sources of evidence appropriate for the students being supported and related learning experience or support offering	Include student perspective and take actions based on those shared perspectives	Increase transparency in results and actions taken Invite alternative interpretations	Ensure collected data are meaningfully disaggregated and interrogated	Make evidence-based changes that address issues of equity that are context specific

Adapted from Montenegro, E., & Jankowski, N. A. (2020).

Key Practices to Implement

- ❖ Student learning outcomes and course learning objectives are written using clear language appropriate for all learners.
- ❖ Include authors, scholars, and artists from diverse backgrounds in course content.
- ❖ Learning prompts or directions include the purpose, task, and criteria for success.
- ❖ Consider adopting a culminating signature assignment such as a portfolio, presentation, or exhibition that allows students to demonstrate holistic learning in relation to the program learning outcomes.

Engage Students in the Process

Capturing student voices and providing opportunities for students to actively participate in the assessment process is mutually beneficial to both faculty and students.

- ❖ Students can co-create program learning outcomes and course learning objectives.
- ❖ Students can participate in data analysis, visualization, and storytelling.
- ❖ Students can co-create rubrics and aid in defining what success of an outcome/objective looks like.
- ❖ Students can offer a unique perspective about their lived experiences, knowledge development, and learning experiences that were/were not meaningful.

Key Terms to Keep in Mind

- ❖ **Agency** - ability to exercise will and power to act purposefully toward goals.
- ❖ **Bias** - un/conscious favor or influence for or against someone or something.
- ❖ **Culturally responsive assessment** - focusing on the student populations the institution serves and using data to enhance learning for all, not just majority, students.
- ❖ **Disaggregated data** - data that have been broken down into sub-categories.
- ❖ **Equity** - justice according to need and fairness; moving beyond “same treatment for all.”
- ❖ **Inclusion** - the practice of designing opportunities and resources for people that might otherwise be excluded or marginalized.
- ❖ **Methodological Diversity** - using multiple forms of measurement to capture diverse ways of knowing.
- ❖ **Positionality** - how identity (including role/status/social identity) constructs perspective.

Curriculum Mapping Overview

Benefits of Curriculum Mapping

- ❖ Promotes discussion among the faculty about learning across the curriculum.
- ❖ Improves program coherence, increasing the likelihood that students achieve program-level learning outcomes.
- ❖ Communicates expectation to students
- ❖ Encourages reflective practices.

Prerequisites to Curriculum Mapping

- ❖ Student learning outcomes for the program
- ❖ List of academic courses and other learning experiences (e.g., internships, externships, symposia, special seminars, etc.)
- ❖ [Curriculum map template](#)

Learning Outcomes		SYR 101	SYR 134	SYR 245	SYR 304	SYR 411	SYR 495	Indirect Measure
1. Apply problem solving skills	Insert "I", "R", or "M"	I		R	R	M	M	Course feedback data
	Insert potential assessment	Problem sets		Quizzes	Final exam questions	Group project	Capstone project	
2. Analyze statistical data and assess reliability of results	Insert "I", "R", or "M"	I		R	R			Grade distribution
	Insert potential assessment	Problem sets		Midterm paper	Research critique			
3. Define advanced/field specific results	Insert "I", "R", or "M"			I	R	M		Internship evaluation
	Insert potential assessment			Problem sets	Final exam questions	Presentation		
4. Interpret laboratory/research results and draw reasonable conclusion	Insert "I", "R", or "M"	I		R			M	Course feedback data
	Insert potential assessments	Lab assignment		Lab reports			Capstone project	
5. Identify the application of field specific tools and analytics	Insert "I", "R", or "M"			R			M	Alumni Survey
	Insert potential assessment			Final paper			Capstone website	

An Outcome is I-Introduced, R-Reinforced, M-Mastered

The ratings (I, R or M) demonstrate the degree to which a student learning outcome is addressed in the courses that make up the academic program.

Potential assessment (s) are measures where assessment activity is happening in a course. A course measure provides good evidence of student learning of the outcome.

Program Coherence Questions to Discuss

1	Do we offer students sufficient learning opportunities for each outcome?	An example of where this is <i>not</i> the case is an outcome with an introductory rating and a few “reinforced” ratings, but no “mastered” rating or vice versa.
2	Does each course contribute to the student learning outcomes in some way?	A course should be associated with one or more outcomes.
3	Is any course taking on too much for the program-level outcome?	It is rare for a course to address each outcome in depth. A capstone course is often the exception here.
4	Are there high-risk courses?	A high-risk course is one in which students struggle in or even fail, which may impact future learning.
5	Are there high-risk outcomes?	A high-risk outcome is one that is difficult for students to achieve at high quality levels.
6	Are the potential measures aligned well to the outcomes?	An example of a mismatch is an outcome asking students to “describe...” but the measure is a multiple-choice exam.

Assessment and Action Plan Update

Overview

The academic program's assessment and action plan is updated annually in Planning & Self-Study (P&SS). Faculty document assessment activities, including measures used, criteria for success, results, analyses, and any actions that will be taken to enhance student learning and/or program operations.

Planning & Self-Study

Planning & Self-Study is accessed at planning.syr.edu.

Timeline

Assessment periods run annually from July 1 to June 30.
The assessment and action plan is updated in P&SS by November 1 of that year.

Assessment Cycle

Syracuse University's four-year assessment cycle runs through June 30, 2025. Between now and then, each student learning outcome is examined at least once and an up-to-date curriculum map is maintained.

Curriculum Maps

Revised or new curriculum maps can be sent to assessment@syr.edu. The Assessment Working Team will edit/create the curriculum maps in P&SS.

Always Remember

The Assessment Working Team is here to help! Email us at assessment@syr.edu

