



Assessment Overview for Academic Programs



Syracuse University

Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE)

effectiveness.syr.edu | assessment@syr.edu

Syracuse University's Assessment Framework

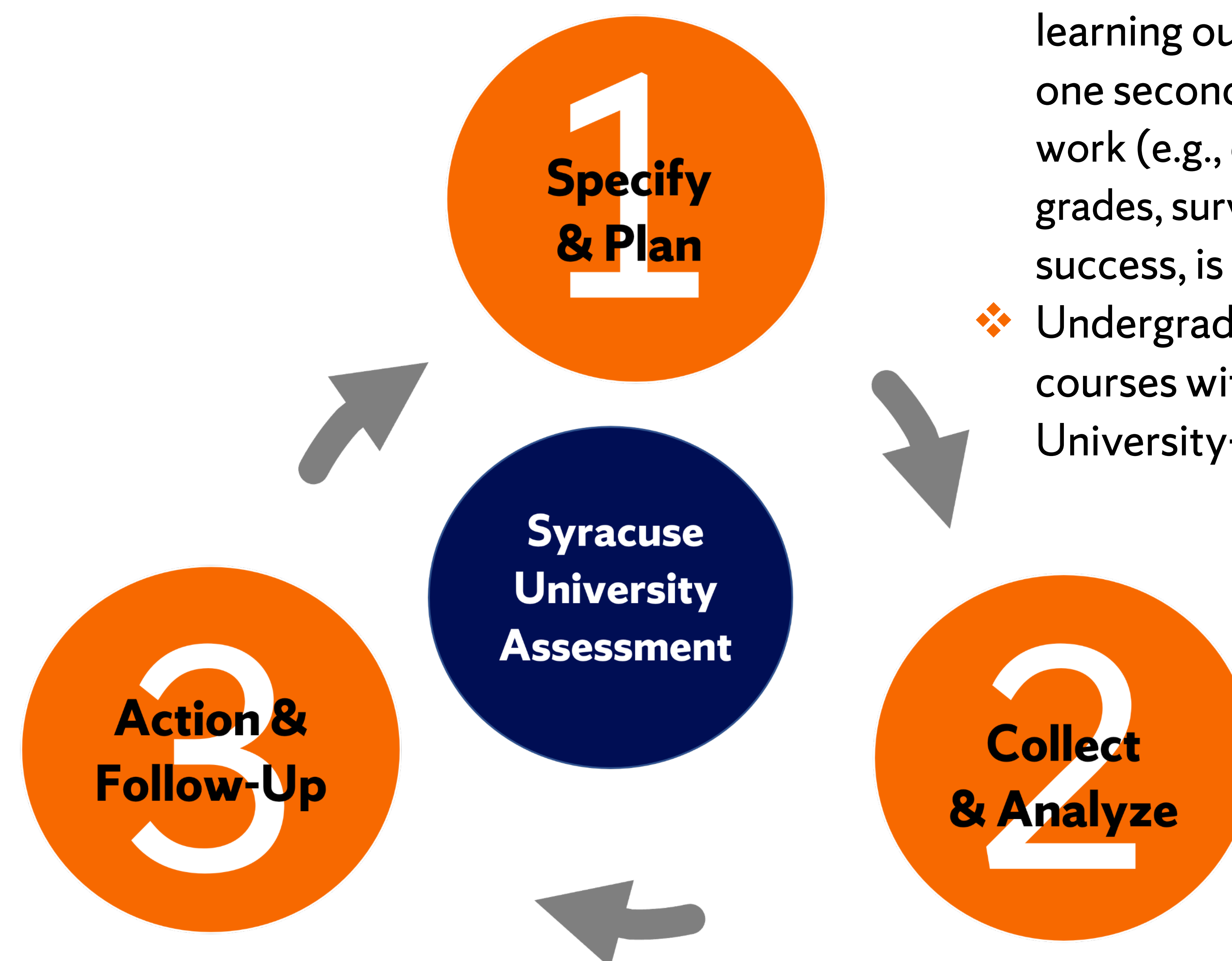
The process for conducting student learning outcomes assessment at the academic program level is organized into three phases:

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 types evidence for each student learning outcome (either two primary evidence or one primary and one secondary evidence). Primary evidence are based on student work (e.g., exams, papers, projects). Secondary evidence may include grades, surveys, or feedback. 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 University-wide 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

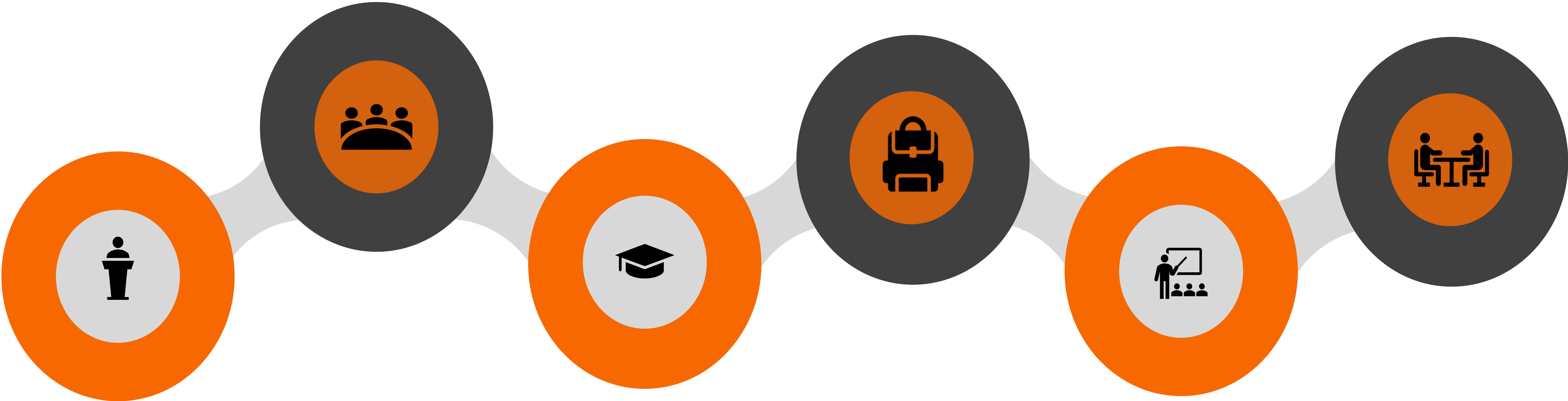
- ❖ Communicate the value of evidence-based decision-making to enhance student learning and operations in the school/college.
- ❖ Establish resources to sustain the school/college's commitment to ongoing improvement.
- ❖ Form and maintain a school/college-wide committee responsible for learning outcome 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

- ❖ 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 committee.



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 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.

Transparent Assessment

Using transparent assessment strategies fosters a collaborative and participatory assessment culture to enhance the student learning experience.

Framework & Guiding Principles

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

- ❖ Meaningful student engagement
- ❖ Data disaggregation, exploration, and action
- ❖ Use context specific approaches and responses
- ❖ Embed transparency in all assessment processes

Transparent Assessment Strategies

	❖ Develop program learning outcomes using clear language appropriate for all learners. ❖ Explore both cognitive and non-cognitive taxonomies, such as <u>Bloom’s (revised)</u> and <u>Finks Taxonomy</u> when crafting outcomes. ❖ Provide students with multiple ways (measures) to demonstrate their knowledge or skills. ❖ Ask students enrolled in the program to identify meaningful learning experiences (measures) they had in courses aligned to the program learning outcomes. ❖ Consider adopting a culminating signature assignment such as a portfolio, presentation, or exhibition that allows students to demonstrate holistic learning in relation to the outcomes. ❖ Identify achievement criteria based on the industry, field, and/or faculty expertise. Criteria should set all students up for post-graduate success.
	❖ Collect multiple different assignment types (measures) to assess each outcome across the curriculum. ❖ Disaggregate data by student subgroups that are meaningful to the program. ❖ When looking at results of different student subgroups, be sure to look at the evidence with the established criteria in mind and not compare performance of one group to another, in particular to the majority group. ❖ Compare results of one or more assignments over a few years to determine consistency of findings. (This can be a very helpful approach for programs with small enrollments.) ❖ Compare cohorts of students (e.g., class of 2024 and class of 2025 following a change to look at learning improvement) or for the same students at different times (e.g., class of 2025 in their first year and again during senior year). ❖ Share results with students to seek feedback on ways to enhance learning.
	❖ As the needs of your students and the program evolve, so will student learning outcomes, the curriculum, instructional methods, and assessment practices. Establish a manageable timeline to implement and assess actions based on results. ❖ Include students and alumni in discussions about actions. They are experts in their own experience with the program and can provide keen insights.

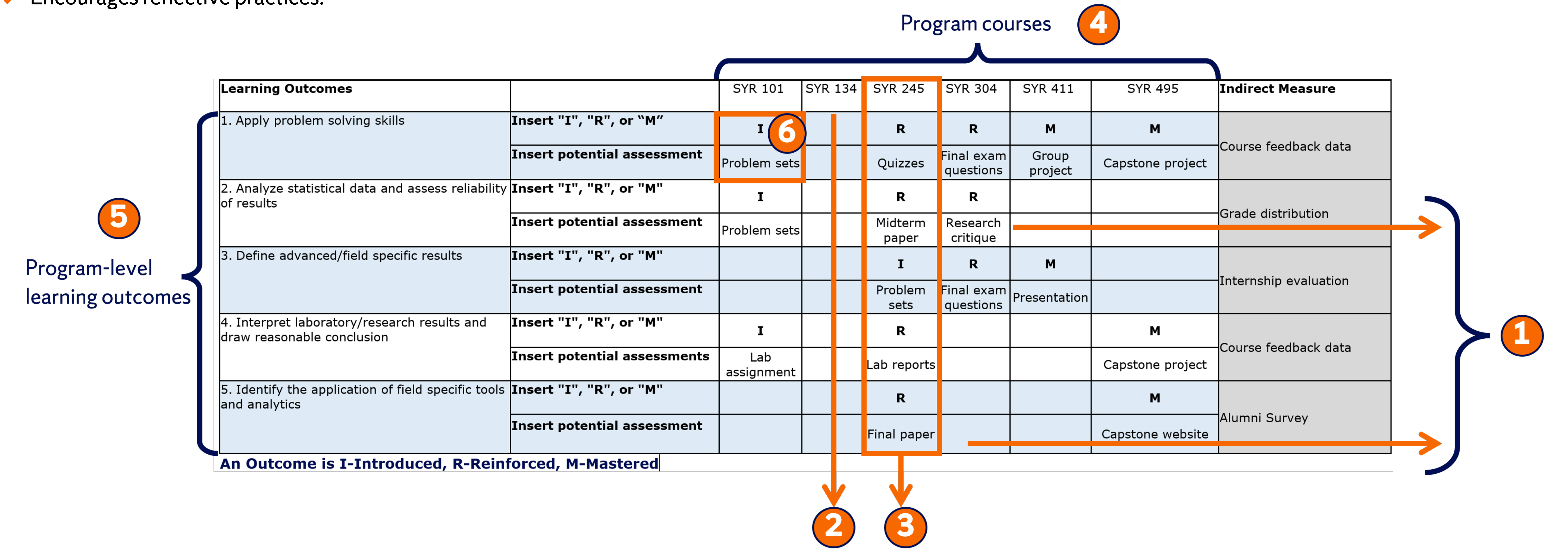
Curriculum Mapping Overview

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, study abroad, symposia, special seminars, etc.)
- ❖ [Curriculum map template](#)



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 may be 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	❖ Syracuse University’s academic assessment and action plans are updated annually to document student learning evidence, results, and planned improvements..
Process & Requirements	❖ Faculty examine one or more student learning outcomes annually, summarizing evidence, criteria, results, analyses, and actions for improvement. ❖ Use at least two evidence to examine each outcome, with one based on student work (e.g., exams, papers, projects). Other evidence may include grades, surveys, or feedback. ❖ Analyze subgroup results and identify strengths, weaknesses, gaps and opportunities to enhance learning.
Curriculum Maps	❖ Revised or new curriculum maps can be sent to assessment@syr.edu.
Reporting & Documentation	❖ Academic programs complete the annual update using a learning outcome worksheet for each assessed outcome and submit completed worksheets to assessment@syr.edu. ❖ Keep program-level discussion minutes and retain student work for one year after the academic year closes.
Timeline & Cycle	❖ Assessment periods run annually from July 1 to June 30. Annual Update Due: November 1. ❖ Syracuse University’s four-year assessment cycle runs through June 30, 2026. Through June 30, 2026, all student learning outcomes must be examined at least once and an up-to-date curriculum map is maintained.
Always Remember	❖ The Assessment Working Team is here to help! Email us at assessment@syr.edu.

