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# ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT AT BROOKLYN COLLEGE

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A Brief Guide

MAY 1, 2017

Version 1.0

## Brief Brooklyn College Assessment Definitions

While there is some continuity between institutions and contexts in defining assessment terms, there are no exact national standards for their use. The definitions of the terms **goal** and **outcome** used in this document have been adopted by Brooklyn College to facilitate consistency in talking about and documenting assessment efforts.

**Goals** state in broad terms what academic departments and programs at Brooklyn College take as their basic mission. In terms of student learning, goals state what faculty would like students to know and be able to do in a “big picture” sense. Goals, generally defined, are to be expected and welcomed, because there are many possible curricular and pedagogical paths to the development of an area of knowledge and/or a set of skills.

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)** differ from goals: while goals are broad and general, SLOs state specifically and concretely the particular knowledge and skills that we want students to develop in a course or academic program. Specificity and concreteness are to be expected in an SLO. What SLOs state is what the instructor or a group of instructors *intend that* students will know and be able to do because of a particular experience. Generally speaking, SLOs are *measurable* while goals are not. *Assessment of outcomes* is a matter of measuring the student product against the objectives for the class/classes: we compare the actual learning with what we intended that students learn.

## **Assessing at the Department or Program Level : Using the Brooklyn College Assessment Template**

### **Introduction**

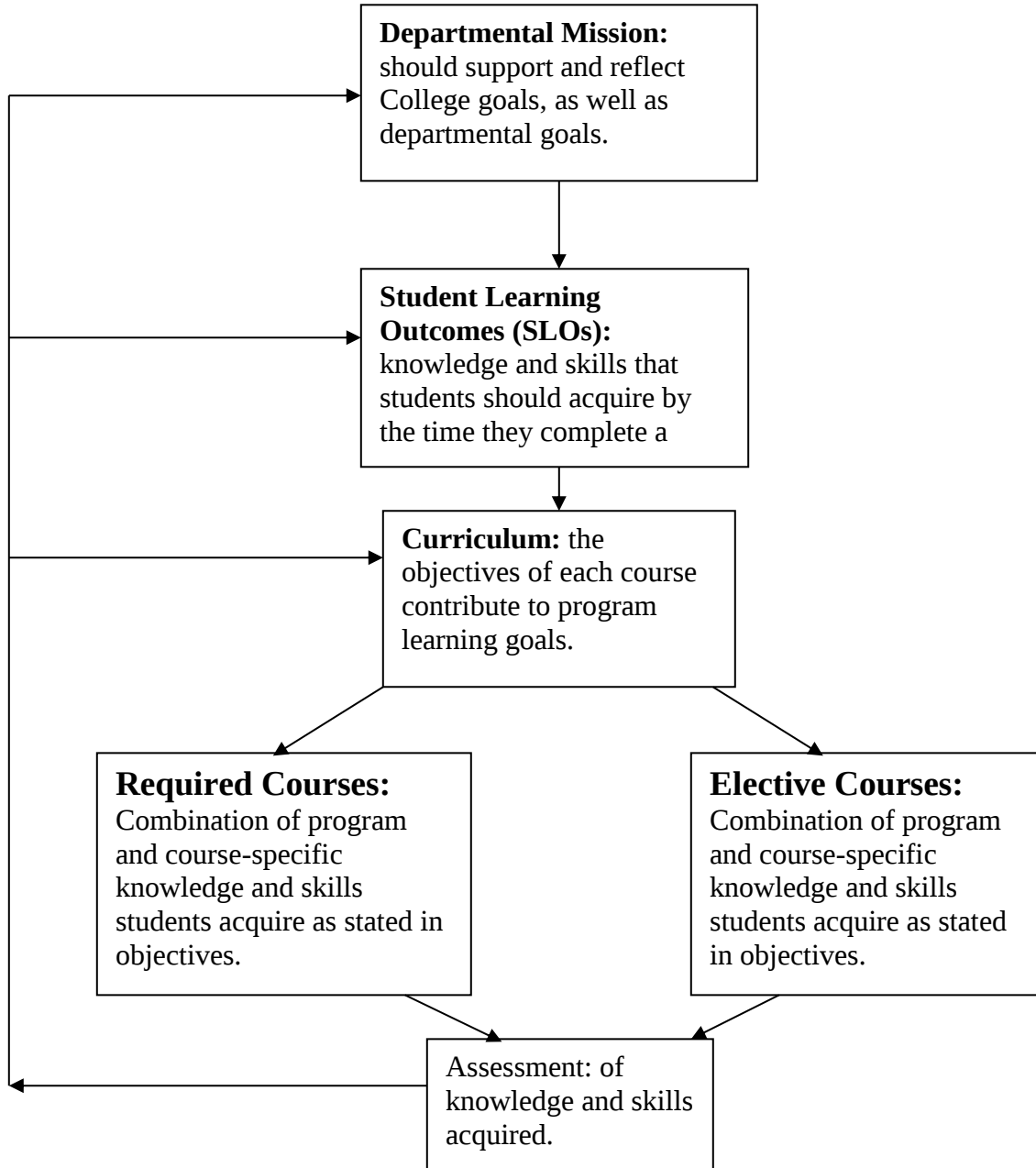
Both the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) and CUNY mandate annual departmental assessment – that is, a purposeful effort to examine what each program or department is accomplishing in terms of student learning. (See Appendix IV for the relevant MSCHE standard, Standard V.) The purpose of this guide is to provide faculty with a broad overview of how and why to assess student learning in individual programs or departments.

At Brooklyn College, academic assessment is a faculty-led process. Faculty define a program or department's mission, express that mission in specific goals and outcomes, decide how best to measure those outcomes according to field-specific best practices, analyze the data to determine how students are doing, and make decisions regarding departmental procedure in light of those findings. Throughout, the Office of Academic Assessment within the Office of the Associate Provost for Institutional Research and Assessment provide logistical support, expert guidance, technical and communicative infrastructure, and advice.

The learning outcomes of each program should flow from and be related to both the mission of the college and the mission of the department. They should reflect the priorities of the department in articulating the most important knowledge and skills that have been identified by the faculty. The course offerings for the department's various programs need to provide opportunities for students to acquire and practice the skills and knowledge needed to meet the programs goals and objectives for student learning. Program faculty identify the particular courses in which students achieve the outcomes that have been stated. Faculty then takes responsibility for modifying their syllabi to include outcomes that serve the department-level outcomes as well as appropriate course-level outcomes.

The department decides how, when, and which of its outcomes to assess. The department decides how to use the information: pedagogy, courses, entire curricula, or even the department's mission may be changed based on assessment findings. The flow chart below offers a view of the flow of the assessment process within a department and the next section offers specific planning advice for departments and programs.

### Outcomes Assessment Flowchart



## Constructing a Departmental Plan

Both academic assessment planning and reporting should be detailed on the Brooklyn College Assessment Plan and Reporting Template, available at [the Office of Academic Assessment website](#).

In constructing a departmental/program assessment plan it is important to remember that in order for a plan to yield useful results it needs to be cost effective (in terms of both money and people's time), it needs to be sustainable, and it needs to ask questions that are useful for the department in order to improve. The basic steps in creating a plan are:\*

1. Articulate your department or program's **mission**. The mission is a brief statement, usually no longer than a few sentences or a brief paragraph. It should cover the full scope of the department's support for the College's mission, and therefore should not focus exclusively on the teaching of majors. (Template section 1)
2. State the **program goals** for the student experience. Goals follow from the mission statement; they articulate desired outcomes in general terms. Narrow the goals into **student learning outcomes (SLOs)**. SLOs articulate goals in precise/concrete terms, so that they can be measured. (Template section 2)
3. State **where in the curriculum** students gain the knowledge/skills: list specific courses by number or other experiences, such as practicums or internships. State whether the knowledge or skills is **Introduced, Emphasized, or Reinforced** in the listed course, if applicable. Refer to your program's Curriculum Map, an example of which is attached as Appendix V. (Template section 3)
4. Choose **measures** or **tools** to use to assess program outcomes. A good way to begin is with one direct measure and one indirect measure. Good examples of direct measures include a review of senior capstone projects; evaluating portfolios of student work; or results from tests, whether part of regular curriculum or used specifically for assessment. Good examples of indirect measures include student surveys, focus groups, and direct observation of teaching. The Academic Assessment Manager can help faculty identify what measures and tools are used by

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\* The material in this section draws heavily from work by Barbara E. Walvoord, *Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

other departments within the given field. A list of common tools and measures of student learning is attached as Appendix II. (Template section 4)

5. Next, the department needs to establish a **cycle** for assessing its program learning outcomes. The timeline of the cycle and the number and type of goals/objectives assessed in a particular semester and/or year is determined by the faculty in the program or department. Ideally, all SLOs will be assessed 2-3 times within a 10-year cycle. The guiding principles for the design of the cycle should be that the assessment cycle is **organized, systematized, and sustained**. Organized, systematized, and sustained assessment processes are ongoing, not “one-and-done.” There should be clear relationships among institutional goals, program and unit-level goals, and course-level goals. Assessments should clearly relate to important goals, and improvements should clearly stem from assessment results. (Template section 4)

6. Finally, the department needs to **establish a documented procedure for analyzing and responding to assessment results**. The most straightforward way to do this would be to dedicate an annual department meeting to the discussion of assessment activities during that term. The advantage of this method is that it allows subsequent actions to be clearly documented through the regular process of department minutes and other standard documentation. Faculty should indicate generally how they will choose students or artifacts to assess (Template section 5), how faculty will derive useful information from the data they gather (Template section 6), and what changes they might make to departmental procedure based on those findings. (Template section 7)

### **Reporting, Documenting and Sharing.**

In order for assessment to make any sense, the process and results from programs and departments need to be shared in appropriate ways. The uses of assessment results, as a matter of college policy, are not to be used punitively or to exclude specific students from the college. The process and results are to be used to make adjustments that will lead to improvements in student learning. In addition documentation has to be available so that accreditors can see our achievements in terms of student learning goals. Lastly, some examples of student work should be kept on file in the departments to document that the department has appropriate college level standards.

Reports on academic assessment of programs and departments are not expected to follow the standards and conventions of peer-reviewed scholarly articles. The constraints inherent to assessing the ongoing learning in real and organic educational contexts within Brooklyn College’s academic programs will typically make those standards impossible. Instead, faculty

should attempt to report results back as honestly and directly as possible, in natural language and without attempting to adopt a legalistic or bureaucratic tone. In other words, faculty should focus on reporting back what they wanted to find out about their students (Template section 8), what tools they used to gather this information (Template section 8), what they actually found (Template section 8) and why it matters (Template section 9), and what they intend to do in light of this information (Template section 9). They may also discuss how they intend to change assessment in the future. Once again, assessment is worth doing only so long as it is practically useful to faculty and administrators, so faculty are encouraged to report back in a way that is most useful for their own purposes.

## **Appendix I. Office of Academic Assessment Contact Information**

Office of Academic Assessment

Brooklyn College  
1216 Boylan Hall  
2900 Bedford Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11210-2889  
P: 718.951.5280

Jo-Ellen Asbury  
Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and Assessment  
[Jo-Ellen.Asbury@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:Jo-Ellen.Asbury@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

Fredrik deBoer  
Academic Assessment Manager  
[Fredrik.deboer@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:Fredrik.deboer@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

[The Office of Academic Assessment at Brooklyn College Online](#)  
[Academic Assessment Resources](#)  
[Academic Assessment Reporting Forms](#)  
[Academic Assessment Calendar and Timeline](#)

## **Appendix II. Measures & Tools Providing Evidence of Student Learning**

See the [Office of Academic Assessment's FAQ page](#) for more.

C= evidence for course-level as well as program-level student learning

### *Direct Evidence of What Students Are Learning*

- Ratings of student skills by field experience supervisors
- Scores and pass rates on appropriate licensure/ certification exams (e.g., Praxis) or other published tests (e.g., Major Field Tests) that assess key learning outcomes
- “Capstone” experiences such as research projects, presentations, theses, dissertations, oral defenses, exhibitions, or performances, scored using a rubric
- Other written work, performances, or presentations scored using a rubric (C)
- Portfolios of student work (C)

- Scores on locally-designed multiple choice and/or essay tests such as final examinations in key courses, qualifying examinations, and comprehensive examinations, accompanied by test “blueprints” describing what the tests assess (C)
- Score gains between entry and exit on published or local tests or writing samples(C)
- Employer ratings of employee skills
- Observations of student behavior (e.g., presentations, group discussions), undertaken and with notes recorded systematically
- Summaries and analyses of electronic discussion threads (C)
- Student reflections on their values, attitudes and beliefs, if developing those are intended outcomes of the course or program (C)

### *Indirect Evidence of Student Learning*

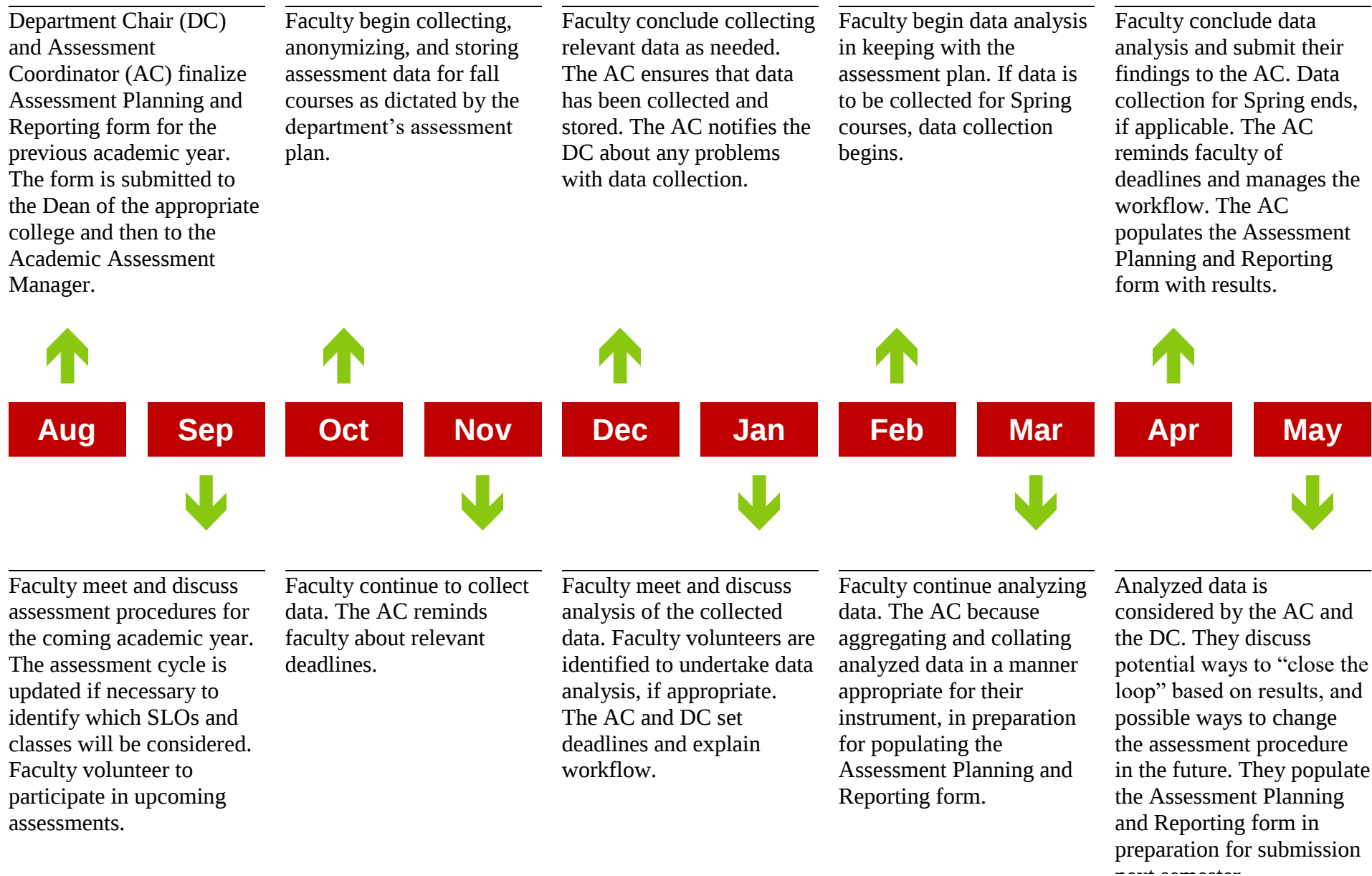
- Course grades (C)
- Assignment grades, if not accompanied by a rubric or scoring guide (C)
- Admission rates into graduate programs and graduation rates from those programs
- Quality/reputation of graduate and four-year programs into which alumni are accepted
- Placement rates of graduates into appropriate career positions and starting salaries
- Alumni perceptions of their career responsibilities and satisfaction
- Student ratings of their knowledge and skills and reflections on what they have learned in the course or program (C)
- Questions on end-of-course student evaluation forms that ask about the course rather than the instructor (C)
- Student/alumni satisfaction with their learning, collected through surveys, exit interviews, or focus groups
- Student participation rates in faculty research, publications, and conference presentations
- Honors, awards, and scholarships earned by students and alumni

### *Evidence of Learning Processes that Promote Student Learning (Insights into Why Students Are or Aren't Learning)*

- Transcripts, catalog descriptions, and course syllabi analyzed for evidence of course or program coherence, opportunities for active and collaborative learning, etc. (C)
- Logs maintained by students documenting time spent on course work, interactions with faculty and other students, nature and frequency of library use, etc. (C)
- Interviews and focus groups with students, asking why they achieve some learning goals well and others less well (C)
- Many of Angelo and Cross' Classroom Assessment Techniques (C)
- Counts of out-of-class interactions between faculty and students (C)

- Counts of programs that disseminate the programs' major learning goals to all the students in the system
- Counts of courses whose syllabi list the courses' major learning goals
- Counts of courses whose stated learning goals include thinking skills as well as basic understanding
- Documentation of the match between course/program objectives and assessments (C)
- Counts of courses whose final grades are based at least in part on assessments of thinking skills as well as basic understanding
- Ratio of performance assessments to paper-and-pencil tests (C)
- Proportions of class time spent in active learning (C)
- Counts of courses with collaborative learning opportunities
- Counts of courses taught using culturally responsive teaching techniques
- Counts of courses with service learning opportunities, or counts of student hours spent in service learning activities
- Library activity in the program's discipline(s) (e.g., number of books checked out; number of online database searches conducted; number of online journal articles accessed)
- Counts of student majors participating in relevant co-curricular activities (e.g., the percentage of Biology majors participating in the Biology Club).

## Appendix III. Sample Academic Assessment Timeline



## Appendix IV. Bloom's Taxonomy - Cognitive Domain

(Modification based on works of Kibler, et al., Groundlund as posted by University of Mississippi School of Education [http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/educ\\_school2/docs/stai/stai\\_2002a.pdf](http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/educ_school2/docs/stai/stai_2002a.pdf))

| Descriptions of Levels of Learning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Illustrative Verbs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| <p><b>1. Knowledge</b> – remembering previously learned material. This skill may involve recall of a wide range of material, from specific facts to complete theories, but all that is required is the bringing to mind of the appropriate information. Knowledge represents the lowest level of learning outcomes in the cognitive domain.</p> <p><b>2. Comprehension</b> – the ability to grasp meaning of material. This skill may be shown by translating material from one form to another (words or numbers), by interpreting material (explaining or summarizing), and by estimating future trends (predicting consequences or effects).</p> <p><b>3. Application</b> – the ability to use learned material in new and concrete situations. This may include the application of such things as rules, methods, concepts, principles, laws, and theories.</p> <p><b>4. Analysis</b> – the ability to break down material into its component parts so that its organizational structure may be understood. This skill may include the identification of the parts, analysis of the relationship between parts, and recognition of the organizational principles involved.</p> <p><b>5. Synthesis</b> – the ability to put parts together to form a new whole. This may involve the production of a unique communication (theme or speech), a plan of operations (research proposal), or a set of abstract relations (scheme for classifying information).</p> <p><b>6. Evaluation</b> – the ability to judge the value of material (statement, novel, poem, research report) for a given purpose. The judgments are to be based on definite criteria. These may be internal criteria (organization) or external criteria (relevance to the purpose) and the student may determine the criteria or be given them.</p> | <p><b>1. Knowledge</b> – enumerate, define, describe, identify, label, list, match, name, outline, recall, recite, recollect, relate, reproduce, select, state</p> <p><b>2. Comprehension</b> – change, construct, convert, decode, defend, define, describe, distinguish, discriminate, estimate, explain, extend, generalize, give example, illustrate, infer, paraphrase, predict, restate, rewrite, solve, summarize</p> <p><b>3. Application</b> – apply, change, compute, demonstrate, develop, discover, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, manipulate, modify, operate, organize, predict, prepare, produce, relate, solve, transfer, use</p> <p><b>4. Analysis</b> – analyze, breakdown, classify, compare, contrast, determine, deduce, diagram, differentiate, distinguish, identify, illustrate, infer, outline, point out, relate, select, separate, subdivide</p> <p><b>5. Synthesis</b> – categorize, combine, compile, compose, conceive, construct, create, design, devise, establish, explain, formulate, generate, invent, make, manage, modify, organize, originate, plan, propose, rearrange, reconstruct, relate, reorganize, revise, rewrite, set up, summarize, tell, write.</p> <p><b>6. Evaluation</b> – appraise, ascertain, choose, compare, conclude, contrast, criticize, decide, defend, describe, discriminate, explain, interpret, justify, relate, resolve, summarize, support, validate, write (a review).</p> |

## Bloom's Taxonomy - Affective Domain

(Modification based on works of Kibler, et al., Groundlund as posted by University of Mississippi School of Education [http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/educ\\_school2/docs/stai/stai\\_2002a.pdf](http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/educ_school2/docs/stai/stai_2002a.pdf))

| Descriptors of the Major Categories in the Affective Domain                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Illustrative Verbs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| <p><b>1. Receiving</b> – willingness to receive or to attend to particular phenomena or stimuli (classroom activities, textbook, assignment, etc.). Receiving has been divided into three subcategories: <i>awareness</i>, <i>willingness to receive</i>, and <i>controlled or selected attention</i>. From the teaching standpoint, receiving is concerned with getting, holding, and directing the student’s attention.</p> <p><b>2. Responding</b> – refers to active participation on the part of the student. The student is sufficiently motivated not to just be 1.2 <i>Willing to attend</i>, but is actively attending. Responding indicates the desire that a student has become sufficiently involved in or committed to a subject, activity, etc., so as to seek it out and gain satisfaction from working with it or engaging in it.</p> <p><b>3. Valuing</b> – the student sees <i>worth</i> or <i>value</i> in the subject, activity, assignment, etc. An important element of behavior characterized by <i>valuing</i> is that it is motivated, not by the desire to comply or obey, but by the individual’s commitment to the underlying value guiding the behavior. Learning outcomes in this area are concerned with behavior that is consistent and stable enough to make the value clearly identifiable.</p> <p><b>4. Organization</b> – bringing together a complex of values, possible disparate values, resolving conflicts between them, and beginning to build an internally consistent value system. The individual sees how the value relates to those already held or to new ones that are coming to be held. The integration of values is less than harmonious; it is a kind of dynamic equilibrium that is dependent upon salient events at a specific point in time.</p> <p><b>5. Characterization by a Value or Value Complex</b> – internalization of values have a place in the individual’s value hierarchy. The values have controlled one’s behavior for a sufficiently long period of time to have developed a characteristic “life style.” The behavior is pervasive, consistent, and predictable.</p> | <p><b>1. Receiving</b> – acknowledge, ask, attend, be aware, choose, describe, follow, give, hold, identify, listen, locate, name, receive, reply, select, show alertness, tolerate, use, view, watch</p> <p><b>2. Responding</b> – agree (to), answer, ask, assist, communicate, comply, consent, conform, contribute, cooperate, discuss, follow-up, greet, help, indicate, inquire, label, obey, participate, pursue, question, react, read, reply, report, request, respond, seek, select, visit, volunteer, write</p> <p><b>3. Valuing</b> – accept, adopt, approve, complete, choose, commit, describe, desire, differentiate, display, endorse, exhibit, explain, express, form, initiate, invite, join, justify, prefer, propose, read, report, sanction, select, share, study, work</p> <p><b>4. Organization</b> – adapt, adhere, alter, arrange, categorize, classify, combine, compare, complete, defend, explain, establish, formulate, generalize, group, identify, integrate, modify, order, organize, prepare, rank, rate, relate, synthesize, systemize</p> <p><b>5. Characterization</b> – act, advocate, behave, characterize, conform, continue, defend, devote, disclose, discriminate, display, encourage, endure, exemplify, function, incorporate, influence, justify, listen, maintain, modify, pattern, practice, preserve, perform, question, revise, retain, support, uphold, use</p> |

## Appendix V. Middle States Commission on Higher Education Standard V

# Standard V

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## Educational Effectiveness Assessment

Assessment of student learning and achievement demonstrates that the institution's students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their program of study, degree level, the institution's mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education.

### Criteria

An accredited institution possesses and demonstrates the following attributes or activities:

1. clearly stated educational goals at the institution and degree/program levels, which are interrelated with one another, with relevant educational experiences, and with the institution's mission;
2. organized and systematic assessments, conducted by faculty and/or appropriate professionals, evaluating the extent of student achievement of institutional and degree/program goals. Institutions should:
  - a. define meaningful curricular goals with defensible standards for evaluating whether students are achieving those goals;
  - b. articulate how they prepare students in a manner consistent with their mission for successful careers, meaningful lives, and, where appropriate, further education. They should collect and provide data on the extent to which they are meeting these goals;
  - c. support and sustain assessment of student achievement and communicate the results of this assessment to stakeholders;
3. consideration and use of assessment results for the improvement of educational effectiveness. Consistent with the institution's mission, such uses include some combination of the following:
  - a. assisting students in improving their learning;
  - b. improving pedagogy and curriculum;
  - c. reviewing and revising academic programs and support services;
  - d. planning, conducting, and supporting a range of professional development activities;
  - e. planning and budgeting for the provision of academic programs and services;
  - f. informing appropriate constituents about the institution and its programs;

- g. improving key indicators of student success, such as retention, graduation, transfer, and placement rates;
  - h. implementing other processes and procedures designed to improve educational programs and services;
- 4. if applicable, adequate and appropriate institutional review and approval of assessment services designed, delivered, or assessed by third-party providers; and
- 5. periodic assessment of the effectiveness of assessment processes utilized by the institution for the improvement of educational effectiveness.

## Appendix VI. A Sample Curriculum Map

| <b>Art MFA Program</b>                                                                                                                                                  | 700G | 702X | 704X | 706G | 707G | 708G | 720.1X |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|
| Analyze the differences among the major periods, artists, genres, and theories of art.                                                                                  | √    | √    | √    | √    |      | √    | √      |
| Use terms of art historical analysis correctly and be able to apply them to unfamiliar works.                                                                           | √    | √    |      | √    |      | √    | √      |
| Write clearly and analytically, with papers including precise thesis statements, well-constructed arguments and thoughtful conclusions, cleanly written and error-free. | √    |      |      | √    |      | √    | √      |
| Visit museums and art exhibitions frequently in order to learn to appreciate a wide and varied range of works of art.                                                   | √    | √    |      | √    |      | √    | √      |
| Demonstrate mastery of technical skills required for working in a particular medium.                                                                                    |      | √    | √    |      |      |      |        |
| Create works of art which demonstrate that the student has found an original voice, judged in relation to contemporary critical thinking.                               |      | √    | √    |      |      |      |        |
| Attend exhibitions, as well as lectures and critiques by visiting artists, art historians, critics, and curators.                                                       | √    | √    | √    |      |      |      | √      |
| Be exposed to an understanding of life skills needed for the profession.                                                                                                | √    |      | √    |      |      |      |        |