

Ramapo College Academic Assessment Resources

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Assessment of Student Learning

The assessment of student learning, an essential part of the larger assessment of institutional effectiveness, is key to creating a campus culture of investigation and reflection aimed at improving student learning. Assessment seeks to determine if students have learned what our learning experiences are designed for them to learn and if the improvements that we have made to learning experiences (based on assessments) have had the desired effects. At Ramapo College, academic programs respond to four interrelated questions:

- What should our students know or be able to do? To answer this question, a program lists its learning outcomes.
- Where do students learn what we hope they will know or be able to do? To answer this question, a program maps its outcomes to its curriculum.
- How do we know that they have learned what we hope they will know or be able to do? To answer this question, a program assesses student learning.
- How do we know that improvements have had desired effects? To answer this question, a program reassesses outcomes by comparing past and present assessment findings.

Faculty groups assessing student learning may find these resources helpful.

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Committees

The College Wide Academic Assessment Committee (CWAAC)

The College Wide Academic Assessment Committee (CWAAC) brings together faculty, administration and staff from across the college to provide holistic oversight and guidance on academic assessment. Ramapo College's assessment program includes three levels of interrelated committees and groups. Committee members include the Chair of GECCo (which assesses general education), a representative from the Library (which assesses information literacy), the Director of Institutional Research and School Assessment Coordinators, who chair School Assessment Committees (which coordinate assessment conducted by convening and other groups). Each coordinator plays a triple role, serving on the College-Wide Academic Assessment Committee (CWAAC), chairing the Assessment Committee of the library or of the school to which the member belongs, and (if from a school) working regularly with all school convening groups. Convening groups assess student learning in the majors, freestanding minors and graduate programs on an annual basis.

CWAAC currently includes:

- Vice Provost of Academic and Faculty Affairs Joyce Shim (ex-officio)
- Chair: Director of Academic Assessment Michael Unger
- Anisfield School of Business School Coordinator: Fariba Nosrati, Assistant Professor of IT Management
- General Education Curriculum Committee Chair: Chirs Reali, Associate Professor of Music
- Potter Library Assessment Coordinator: Librarian Christina Connor
- School of Contemporary Arts School Coordinator: Jackie Skrynski, Associate Professor of Art
- School of Humanities and Global Studies School Coordinator: Sarah Koenig, Assistant Professor of American Studies
- School of Social Science and Human Services School Coordinator: Sharon Leathers, Assistant Professor of Literacy
- School of Theoretical and Applied Science School Coordinator: Carrie Millier, Assistant Professor of Environmental Chemistry

Responsibilities of the College Wide Academic Assessment Committee

- Collaborate with the vice provost for curriculum and assessment to coordinate College-wide assessment activities;
- Review institutional learning goals and work with programs to align institutional learning goals with program learning goals and outcomes.

- Review assessment plans and reports from the school and library assessment committees and from GECCo and the College Honors Program to provide peer feedback, to promote collaboration, to identify resources to support assessment activities, and to determine overall progress made towards achieving institutional goals;
- Review institutional assessment data (e.g., NSSE and CLA) and collaborate with the vice provost for academic programs to coordinate or to implement, as necessary, institutional assessments of institutional goals;
- Contribute to periodic Assessment Briefs and to the Assessment Website and suggest other assessment-related resources.

CWAAC school representatives chair the School Assessment Committee (SAC) and:

- Call regular meetings of SAC to review school-wide assessment activities;
- Provide assessment leadership and expertise in the school;
- Work regularly with all of the school's convening groups as well as other SAC members to establish and/or revise program learning (goals and) outcomes, to align them with institutional learning goals, to map program curricula, and to plan, to implement, and to evaluate program assessments;
- Coordinate and/or implement, in collaboration with other SAC members, school assessment activities, such as syllabi audits and assessment retreats;
- Ensure that all convening groups have submitted complete, thoughtful assessment plans and reports for review and archiving in a timely manner;
- Facilitate communication between convening groups and SAC and between SAC and CWAAC
- Review, in collaboration with other SAC members, program-level assessment plans and reports to provide peer feedback, to promote collaboration, and to determine overall progress made towards achieving school goals.

The Library assessment coordinator chairs the Library Assessment Committee and:

- Calls regular meetings of the Library Assessment Committee to review assessment activities;
- Provides assessment leadership and expertise in the library;
- Works regularly with all librarians to plan, to implement, and to evaluate assessments;
- Ensures that the library has submitted complete, thoughtful assessment plans and reports for review and archiving in a timely manner;
- Facilitates communication between the library and CWAAC.

- Reviews goals and outcomes in information literacy to ensure alignment with institutional and general-education learning goals and outcomes in collaboration with CWAC and GECCo;
- Implements independent assessments of information literacy using institutional and/or general-education learning goals and outcomes, review assessment results, and provide feedback for improvement of student learning;
- Collaborates as needed with convening groups, SACs, GECCo, and CWAAC to implement assessments of information literacy, to review assessment results, and to provide feedback for improvement of student learning; and
- Submits assessment plans and reports of independent library assessments for peer review by CWAAC and for archiving.

School Assessment Committees

The School Assessment Committee (SAC), comprised of faculty from the school, oversees and coordinates assessment activities in the school. The chair of the committee, who is also the school assessment coordinator, serves on the College-Wide Assessment Committee (CWAAC).

Specific activities of SAC include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Work with convening groups to ensure alignment of program (goals and) outcomes with institutional learning goals;
- Coordinate and/or implement school assessment activities, such as syllabi audits and assessment retreats;
- Review program-level assessment plans and reports to provide peer feedback, to promote collaboration, and to determine overall progress made towards achieving school goals; and

In addition, SAC members will divide themselves among the convening groups in the school so that individual SAC members can work closely with one or more convening groups to establish and/or revise program learning (goals and) outcomes, to map program curricula, and to plan, implement, and evaluate program assessments. The chair of SAC will work regularly with all convening groups in the school on these assessment activities.

General Education

The Chair of the General Education Curriculum Committee serves on the College Wide Academic Assessment Curriculum Committee. In addition to the general roles outlined above, the GECCo chair coordinates and manages General Education assessment, facilitates

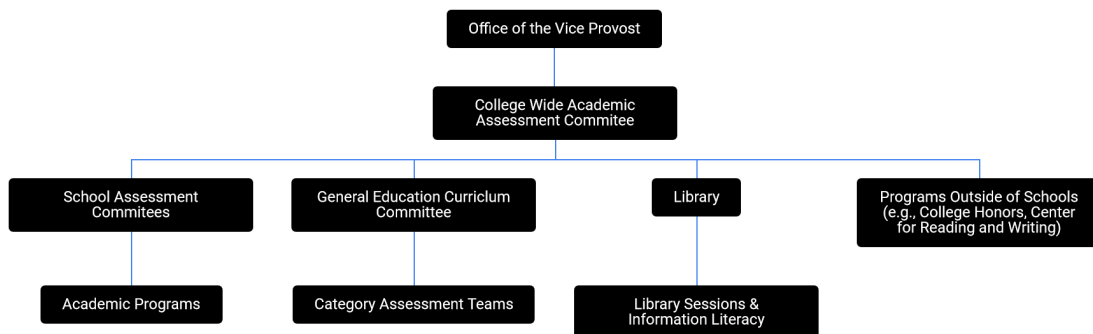
communication between CWAAC and GECCo, submits assessment plans and reports to GECCo for feedback and archiving, and makes regular assessment reports to appropriate stakeholders. Please see the [GECCo Website](#) and [GECCo Manual](#) for a complete overview of General Education Assessment.

Convening Group Responsibilities

Most academic assessment activities happen within or with substantial input from convening groups. Convening group responsibilities include:

- Review academic program goals and outcomes and align them to institutional learning goals;
- Map program goals and outcomes to program curricula;
- Implement assessments of academic programs, review results of these assessments, and use them for improvement;
- Work with GECCo, SACs, and Library to implement assessments of general education and information literacy as needed;
- Submit assessment documents for peer review by SACs and Deans.

Academic Assessment Organizational Chart



Note: SAC Chairs, GECCo Chair and the Assessment Library are represented on CWAAC. CWAAC also reviews plans and reports for other programs that do not fall within academic schools that are not directly represented on CWAAC (represented by dotted line).

Other Assessment Committees

- [Institutional Effectiveness Council](#)
- [Administrative Assessment Committee \(AAC\)](#)
- [Institutional Research](#)

- [General Education Curriculum Committee \(GECCo\)](#)

Quick Start

This guide provides an overview of academic majors, freestanding minors and faculty roles and contributions to assessing student learning.

All academic majors

- Articulate student **learning goals** and approximately five to eight **student learning outcomes**.
- Create a **three year assessment plan** during which it will assess all program learning outcomes and a **curriculum map**.
- Use **two measures** for each student learning outcome.
 - At least one measure must be a **direct measure** of student learning.
 - The second measure can be **direct or indirect measures** of student learning
- Reflect on **findings** for both measures, compare to previous assessments if possible and implement appropriate **actions**.

Freestanding minors with at least 12 students

- Articulate **student learning goals** and approximately two to three **student learning outcomes**.
- Create a **three year assessment plan** and **curriculum map**.
- Assess student learning if there are at least 12 students enrolled in the freestanding minor per the fall Enrollment Report produced by Institutional Research.
 - Assess one student learning outcome per year. Note: programs with more than three outcomes will need to assess multiple outcomes some years.
 - Use **two measures** for each student learning outcome.
 - At least one measure must be a **direct measure** of student learning.
 - The second measure can be **direct or indirect measures** of student learning
 - Reflect on **findings** for both measures, compare to previous assessments if possible and implement appropriate **actions**.

Overview of Faculty Assessment Roles

Faculty are essential to the assessment process and perform three general roles.

- Participate in **assessment planning** and analysis as part of their convening group. This includes creating / revising **student learning outcomes**, updating **curriculum maps**, reviewing assessment data and findings, comparing current assessment results to previous results, and creating appropriate **actions**.
- Some academic years, faculty will **score** or evaluate **student products** or **other evidence of student learning**.
- Some academic years, faculty will share **student products** or **other evidence of student learning** from your courses with the convening group for assessment when appropriate.

Assessment Timeline

By October 4: Programs submit draft assessment plans to their school assessment coordinators.

A plan includes:

- An updated list of student learning goals and outcomes;
- An updated curriculum map;
- A plan for the academic year (outcomes, measures, and achievement targets).

By October 15: School Assessment Committees (SACs) provide feedback and programs

By November 1: Programs submit final plans to school assessment coordinators.

By May 30: Programs submit assessment reports to their school assessment coordinators. A report includes, in addition to the items in the plan:

- Assessment results and actions for each unmet target;
- Reassessment: comparing findings over time for the measures (if applicable);
- Report on past actions (if applicable).

By June 15: School Assessment Committees (SACs) provide feedback to programs.

By June 30: Programs submit finalized reports to their school assessment coordinators, Deans (for review) and Academic Assessment .

Learning Goals and Outcomes

Program Goals

A learning *goal* is a general statement about student learning that provides a framework for what programs want students to learn or do.

- Goals may have words like understand, appreciate and participate.
- Examples
 - Culinary arts majors will understand the fundamentals of food science.
 - Culinary arts majors will value interdisciplinary perspectives
 - Culinary arts will prepare students for the job market and a future career by completing an internship.
- All learning goals should have at least one measurable student learning outcome
- Learning goals may have multiple measurable student learning outcomes.

Student Learning Outcomes

A student learning outcome (sometimes called an objective) is a succinct statement of what programs would like students to know or be able to do to achieve a learning goal.

- Learning outcomes are associated with one learning goal.
- Pair a measurable action verb with a specific statement about what students will demonstrate they have learned or are able to do.
 - Some action verbs are: identify, recall, explain, describe, apply, compare, contrast, generate, produce, create, carry out.
 - Avoid verbs like *think*, *appreciate*, and *understand*. These verbs are hard to measure and are better suited for articulating learning goals.
 - Be aware of verbs that suggest measuring change over time (e.g., increase, improve, enhance, gain). Measuring change over time requires specific and sometimes time consuming assessment strategies.
 - Instead of “students will *think* about different theories of international relations,” consider one of the following:
 - *Explain* international conflict using realism and idealism.
 - *Apply* realism and idealism to a current international conflict.
 - Need help formulating outcomes using action verbs? Contact Academic Assessment, your School Assessment Coordinator or click here for more [information domains and levels of student learning](#) (Iowa State University).
- Avoid long lists of student learning outcomes. Most programs will have five to seven student learning outcomes. Keep in mind that outcomes are:
 - A manageable list of knowledge, skills, attributes or attitudes that students should acquire through required learning experiences.
 - Do not represent everything that students learn in a program or course.
 - Student focused, not professor or program focused
- Avoid outcomes with long lists of several skills or knowledge areas (usually linked by commas).

- We can assess outputs at the end of a learning experience, at the end of a course, at different points of a program, or at graduation. Typically, program assessment examines student learning at different points of a program.
- A student learning outcome addresses student learning, not program effectiveness. For instance, assessing what students have learned at the end of their internships is different from tracking the number of student internships.
- Every course syllabus in your program should include the outcome(s) that your program's curriculum map aligned with that course. In addition, the course syllabus should include appropriate outcomes for other programs that the course contributes to (e.g., General Education, majors and minors) and outcomes that the instructor wishes to add.

Program Goal	Student Learning Outcome
Culinary arts majors will understand the fundamentals of food science.	Culinary Arts students will be able to describe the chemical reactions of foods.
Value interdisciplinary perspectives	Students will explain how culinary traditions change over time in light of immigration and technical developments in chemical reactions of foods.
Prepare students for the job market and a future career by completing an internship	Students will articulate how their internship advances their career aspirations.

Majors: Major programs usually have five to seven outcomes and assess at least two outcomes per year. Programs should link goals to outcomes and assess all outcomes within a three-year cycle. Seven or more outcomes will require programs to assess more than two outcomes per year.

Freestanding Minors: Freestanding minors should have at least one learning goal, two outcomes, and assess at least one outcome per year. Programs should link the goal(s) to outcomes. Freestanding minors with 12 or more enrolled students should assess all outcomes should be assessed within a three-year cycle. This will require freestanding minors with more than three outcomes to assess multiple outcomes per year. Freestanding minors with 11 or less students are not required to assess student learning.

List of Learning Outcomes & Curriculum Maps

[All-College Learning Goals and Objectives](#)

The all-college goals and objectives are encoded in Ramapo College's General Education program and express what every Ramapo College student should know or be able to do upon graduation. All Ramapo goals and outcomes major, minor, and so forth should support aspects of the all-college goals and outcomes.

[Outcomes for Majors, Minors, and Graduate Programs can be found in the college College Catalog](#)

[Outcomes for the College Honors Program](#)

[Outcomes for Information Literacy](#)

[Ramapo College Program Curriculum Map](#)

[General Education Curriculum Map](#)

Assessment Template

Assessment Template Expected Plan Submission: Oct. 4, 2024 Expected Report Submission: May 30, 2025	
Program Name:	Convener:
Curriculum Map Attached? Yes or No	Assessment Coordinator:
Please List the Program's Current Student Learning Goals & Outcomes with When the Outcomes Will Be Assessed.	
Outcome Being Assessed:	
Measure 1: DIRECT ASSESSMENT (all programs must have at least one direct measure)	
Who will assess the outcome (While two readers are preferred, it may be efficient and effective in some situations to have the instructor score student products if these are, for example, deeply embedded in Canvas or require specialized knowledge)?	
What is the instrument or method (e.g., rubric, survey, multiple-choice questions...)?	
What is the student product (e.g., paper, final exam question)?	
What is the assessment process (e.g., blind review after an inter-rater reliability session and number of readers)?	
What semester is the assessment (e.g., fall semester)?	

What courses or which student populations will be used for the assessment (e.g., CA 456)?	
How many student products are in the assessment? Please include the final number of student products assessed in the program's spring report.	[Add this information when submitting the program's assessment report in the spring semester]
Achievement Target <i>Recommended achievement targets range from 70% to 80%, but programs can set their own.</i>	
Past Assessment Findings <i>Review <u>past assessment reports</u> to find your results for the last time the outcome and measure were used and include these results here. If no comparable previous results are available due to changes to outcomes or assessment measures simply indicate "not applicable" and the reason why.</i>	
Current Findings	[Add this information when submitting the program's assessment report in the spring semester]
Measure 2: DIRECT or INDIRECT ASSESSMENT (all programs must have at least one direct measure)	
Who will assess the outcome (While two readers are preferred, it may be efficient and effective in some situations to have the instructor score student products if these are, for example, deeply embedded in Canvas or require specialized knowledge)?	
What is the instrument or method (e.g., rubric, survey, multiple-choice questions...)?	
What is the student product (e.g., paper, final exam question)?	

What is the assessment process (e.g., blind review after an inter-rater reliability session and number of readers)?	
What semester is the assessment (e.g., fall semester)?	
What courses or which student populations will be used for the assessment will be measured (e.g., CA 456)?	
How many student products are in the assessment? Please include the final number of student products assessed in the program’s spring report.	[Add this information when submitting the program’s assessment report in the spring semester]
<p>Achievement Target</p> <p><i>Recommended achievement targets range from 70% to 80%, but programs can set their own.</i></p>	
<p>Past Assessment Findings</p> <p><i>Review <u>past assessment reports</u> to find your results for the last time the outcome and measure were used and include these results here. If no comparable previous results are available due to changes to outcomes or assessment measures simply indicate “not applicable” and the reason why.</i></p>	
<p>Current Findings</p>	[Add this information when submitting the program’s assessment report in the spring semester]
<p>CLOSING THE LOOP & REASSESSMENT</p> <p><i>Consider the findings for both measures of this outcome and compare these results to previous assessments in light of past actions (if possible). If comparisons are not possible, indicate “not applicable” and the reason why.</i></p>	

<p>Past Actions</p> <p><i>What were the program's actions for unmet achievement targets for this outcome and were these actions implemented? If not, why not?</i></p>	
<p>Reassessment</p> <p><i>Compare the current findings to the previous findings. Did the implemented actions improve student learning?</i></p>	<p>[Add this information when submitting the program's assessment report in the spring semester]</p>
<p>Current Actions</p> <p><i>Provide a specific action for each unmet achievement target. If you assessed the outcome in the past, indicate if you plan to add a new action or enhance the existing action. Use the document on suggested loop-closing strategies.</i></p>	<p>[Add this information when submitting the program's assessment report in the spring semester]</p>
<p>Actions Implemented Since Last Report</p> <p><i>Has the program implemented actions for outcomes not being assessed this year since the last report? If so, please report the actions here. If there are no new actions to report, indicate "none."</i></p>	<p>[Add this information when submitting the program's assessment report in the spring semester]</p>
<p>Support or Resource Request</p> <p><i>What support or resources, if any, would help facilitate implementing these assessment actions (e.g., none, request faculty line, purchase software, purchase laboratory equipment, hire adjunct, etc.)?</i></p>	<p>[Add this information when submitting the program's assessment report in the spring semester]</p>

Note: Some convening groups and schools have adapted the plan template to address specific disciplinary or accreditation needs, although the basic information remains the same. Externally accredited programs should use a format that facilitates compliance with program accrediting bodies.

Outcome Being Assessed:

Measure 1: DIRECT ASSESSMENT (all programs must have at least one direct measure)	
Who will assess the outcome (While two readers are preferred, it may be efficient and effective in some situations to have the instructor score student products if these are, for example, deeply embedded in Canvas or require specialized knowledge)?	
What is the instrument or method (e.g., rubric, survey, multiple-choice questions...)?	
What is the student product (e.g., paper, final exam question)?	
What is the assessment process (e.g., blind review after an inter-rater reliability session and number of readers)?	
What semester is the assessment (e.g., fall semester)?	
What courses or which student populations will be used for the assessment (e.g., CA 456)?	
How many student products are in the assessment? Please include the final number of student products assessed in the program's spring report.	[Add this information when submitting the program's assessment report in the spring semester]
<p>Achievement Target</p> <p><i>Recommended achievement targets range from 70% to 80%, but programs can set their own.</i></p>	
<p>Past Assessment Findings</p> <p><i>Review <u>past assessment reports</u> to find your results for the last time the outcome and measure were used and include these results here. If no comparable previous results are available due to changes to outcomes or assessment measures simply indicate "not applicable" and the reason why.</i></p>	

Current Findings	[Add this information when submitting the program's assessment report in the spring semester]
Measure 2: DIRECT or INDIRECT ASSESSMENT (all programs must have at least one direct measure)	
Who will assess the outcome (While two readers are preferred, it may be efficient and effective in some situations to have the instructor score student products if these are, for example, deeply embedded in Canvas or require specialized knowledge)?	
What is the instrument or method (e.g., rubric, survey, multiple-choice questions...)?	
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What courses or which student populations will be used for the assessment will be measured (e.g., CA 456)?	
How many student products are in the assessment? Please include the final number of student products assessed in the program's spring report.	[Add this information when submitting the program's assessment report in the spring semester]
Achievement Target <i>Recommended achievement targets range from 70% to 80%, but programs can set their own.</i>	

<p>Past Assessment Findings</p> <p><i>Review <u>past assessment reports</u> to find your results for the last time the outcome and measure were used and include these results here. If no comparable previous results are available due to changes to outcomes or assessment measures simply indicate “not applicable” and the reason why.</i></p>	
<p>Current Findings</p>	<p>[Add this information when submitting the program’s assessment report in the spring semester]</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">CLOSING THE LOOP & REASSESSMENT</p> <p><i>Consider the findings for both measures of this outcome and compare these results to previous assessments in light of past actions (if possible). If comparisons are not possible, indicate “not applicable” and the reason why.</i></p>	
<p>Past Actions</p> <p><i>What were the program’s actions for unmet achievement targets for this outcome and were these actions implemented? If not, why not?</i></p>	
<p>Reassessment</p> <p><i>Compare the current findings to the previous findings. Did the implemented actions improve student learning?</i></p>	<p>[Add this information when submitting the program’s assessment report in the spring semester]</p>
<p>Current Actions</p> <p><i>Provide a specific action for each unmet achievement target. If you assessed the outcome in the past, indicate if you plan to add a new action or enhance the existing action. Use the document on suggested loop-closing strategies.</i></p>	<p>[Add this information when submitting the program’s assessment report in the spring semester]</p>
<p>Actions Implemented Since Last Report</p> <p><i>Has the program implemented actions for outcomes not being assessed this year since the last report? If so, please report the actions here. If there are no new actions to report, indicate “none.”</i></p>	<p>[Add this information when submitting the program’s assessment report in the spring semester]</p>

<p>Support or Resource Request</p> <p>What support or resources, if any, would help facilitate implementing these assessment actions (e.g., none, request faculty line, purchase software, purchase laboratory equipment, hire adjunct, etc.)?</p>	<p>[Add this information when submitting the program's assessment report in the spring semester]</p>
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Curriculum Mapping

A curriculum map is a visual tool showing the alignment between outcomes and courses. Typically, a curriculum map is a matrix with courses arranged vertically and outcomes arranged horizontally (or the reverse). Curriculum maps help programs:

- Identify relationships between learning outcomes and courses
- Identify program strengths and opportunities for improvement
- Determine whether students have enough opportunities to meet program learning outcomes by the time they graduate. For example, a learning outcome that appears for the first time in a capstone course may not give students adequate opportunity to develop the knowledge or skills of that outcome as they progress through the program.
- Identify likely places to collect assessment data and implement program improvements
- Develop new program proposals by illustrating how existing and new courses will fit together to deliver the intended new curriculum.
- Differentiate between required and elective courses

Tips for Successful Curriculum Map

- Include program requirements that all students must complete to graduate in the curriculum map
- Each program learning outcome should appear in at least two courses to provide multiple learning opportunities.
- Courses do not need to have all program outcomes. In general, courses should include a learning outcome when a *substantial* portion of the course or student grades is related to the outcome. A curriculum map that has all outcomes covered in all courses suggests that program outcomes may not be finely tuned enough for assessment purposes.
- Should electives be in curriculum maps? Yes, but it may not be necessary to list all courses that serve as electives for most programs. Suskie (2018) states that programs do not need to include electives in program maps because these learning experiences are designed to be different for each student. To provide for flexibility, programs can consider the following regarding curriculum maps:
 - Electives do not have to be included if a majority of student credits are earned through program requirements that all students must complete.
 - What if your program requires students to choose classes from within a category or list of courses? Programs can include a single entry in their curriculum map for the category or list similar to a program course. This avoids having a long list of courses in a map that may obscure important patterns.
 - Programs may include all electives in their maps if they determine doing so provides important value or is necessary for external accreditation.

Types of Curriculum Maps: Programs typically use one of two styles of maps: a *check-off* or a *progressive* curriculum map. *Check-off* maps indicate linkages between courses and outcomes with an “X” or other tick-mark. *Progressive* maps indicate levels of proficiency for each course - outcome linkage, which most often Introduce-Practice-Master (IPM).

Check-Off Curriculum Map Example

	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3
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CA 234	X		X
CA 345		X	X
CA 456	X	X	X

Progressive Curriculum Map Example

Sometimes we want to know not only where students receive opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills but also whether the courses introduce skills, allow students to practice those skills, or give them opportunities to show mastery. (Other ways to phrase those developmental levels are possible.) This map uses codes (I=introduce, P=practice, and M=master) to indicate the levels:

Map #2: Progressive Curriculum Map

	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3
CA 234	I		I
CA 345		I	P
CA 456	M	P	M

Progressive maps assume that there will be distinct learning experiences for each level. I-P-M maps, for example, assume three distinct experiences. Programs should not include multiple levels of proficiency in the same course - outcome box. Each box in the map should have one level of proficiency. Multiple levels can cause confusion as to course expectations and how the course fits into the program's curriculum.

Closing the Loop & Reassessment

The most important part of any assessment cycle is closing the loop: the moments when the convening group collectively discusses assessment findings, identifies ways to use the findings to improve student learning and/or assessment methodology, indicates next steps in the actions field of the assessment report and reassessment. Reassessment – comparing current results to previous results in an effort to determine the effectiveness of actions – is often rewarding for groups, as they can measure their progress over time. Although steps to improve student learning and methods to improve assessment methodology are both valid responses to assessment findings, the convening group should always emphasize steps to improve student learning—even if small, incremental ones—as improving student learning is the primary purpose of student-learning assessment.

Suggested Actions to Improve Student Learning

- Course-level actions
 - Assignments
 - Consider answering questions like: are the assignments sufficiently related to the learning outcomes, are instructors clearly communicating to students what they are expected to produce related to the learning outcome?
 - Revise the assignment.
 - Increase the number of assignments requiring demonstration of the relevant skill in the same course.

- o Course delivery
 - Devote additional class time to discussing the relevant content or practicing the relevant skill.
 - Change the method of delivering the content or practicing the skill.
- o Student feedback
 - Give students a copy of the rubric, and/or ask them to rate themselves and/or their peers using the rubric.
 - Provide opportunities for students to give feedback on their learning (e.g., surveys, focus groups, minute papers).
 - Ensure the alignment from program outcome to course outcome to course assignment and communicate that alignment to students (e.g., in the syllabus) so that they understand the purpose of the assignment.
- o Other
 - Change textbooks or other classroom materials.
 - Add, delete, or modify a course.
 - Identify a common problem across all sections of a course that delivers the outcome, but give instructors freedom to implement different but complementary solutions.
- Program-level actions
 - o Increase the number of assignments requiring demonstration of the relevant skill across the program.
 - o Create a signature assignment for all sections of the course to ensure common student knowledge.
 - o Create additional opportunities to develop the relevant skill across the program.
 - o Change pre-requisites for this and/or other relevant courses or alter course sequencing to scaffold learning.
 - o Revise the program.
 - o Add, delete, or modify a learning outcome.
- Other actions
 - o Attend a relevant FRC or IDC workshops.
 - o Meet with School Assessment Coordinator or the Director of Assessment.

Suggested Actions to Improve Assessment Methodology

- Change or revise the measure.
 - o Change the embedded assignment for the direct assessment.
 - o Consider alternatives for the indirect assessment.
 - o Revise the indirect assessment.
- Prepare scorers.
 - o Conduct a calibration session to enhance inter-rater reliability.
 - o Include the assignment instructions along with the assignment in the packet of materials given to raters.
- Other
 - o Reduce or increase the sample size.
 - o Revise the rubric.
 - o Alter the display of assessment findings.
 - o Revise the achievement target up or down.

- Get back to the basics:
 - Write outcomes that articulate what your program truly values in student learning.
 - Think of assessment as a research project: What are you curious about?
 - Select measures likely to yield results that you can confidently use.
 - Set achievement targets that reflect your program's standard for acceptable performance.

- Consider the full range of measures available to you.
 - Direct assessment measures include scoring papers or other student products on rubric, embedding questions in exams or quizzes, multiple-choice questions, open-ended prompts, essays, projects, portfolios, presentations, performance, pre- and post- tests and other approaches.
 - You can conduct indirect assessment by measuring student perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, confidence, and more through surveys, journals, focus groups, interviews, course evaluations, and other methods.
 - Want to use student opinion surveys and course evaluations for assessment? Contact Claire Naparano or Jeff Delos Santos (Applications Programmer - ITS) for online student opinion surveys. Paper evaluations are available from Ramapo's IR office.
 - Ramapo's IR office has a number of surveys and analyses that are appropriate for indirect assessment measures including alumni surveys, student surveys and enrollment trends.
 - Did the program consider conversations with with students, convening group discussions, FRC summer sessions on remote education, IDC programming, Canvas sessions, survey results shared by the Provost's Office, and/or trends in the discipline (e.g., successes at other institutions, professional conferences or published research)? These are all reasonable sources of evidence that contribute to data-driven decision making.

- Don't forget all the basic components of the assessment plan:
 - Assess at least two outcomes every year.
 - Use at least two measures for each outcome.
 - Include at least one direct measure for each outcome.
 - Set an achievement target for each measure.
 - Include brief answers to these questions in the paragraphs about the measures:
 - Who will assess the outcome (e.g., faculty not teaching the course)?
 - What instrument or method will they use (e.g., rubric)?
 - What student product will they use (e.g., final exam question)?
 - What assessment process or methodology will they use (e.g., blind review after an inter-rater reliability session)?
 - When will they measure (e.g., fall 2015)?
 - In what courses or which student populations will they measure (e.g., CA 456)?
 - How many student products will they assess? Please report the total number of

- o student products assessed.
- o Include past actions and previous findings for the outcomes being assessed to facilitate reassessment.

Checklists

Planning Phase

- The plan includes a full list of current goals and outcomes with years assessed.
- The plan includes a current curriculum map.
- Majors will assess at least two outcomes. Freestanding minors will assess at least one outcome.
- Each outcome has at least two measures.
- Each pair of measures includes at least one direct measure.
- The description of each measure includes the following
 - Who will assess the outcome (e.g., two faculty not teaching the course, instructor of the course plus another reader, or instructor only)
 - What instrument or method will they use (e.g., rubric)
 - What student product will they use (e.g., final exam question)
 - What assessment process will they use (e.g., blind review after an inter-rater reliability session)
 - When will they measure (e.g., semester and year)
 - What courses or which student populations will they measure
 - How many student products will they assess
 - Each measure includes an achievement target.
 - Each measure indicates past assessment findings.
- Past actions for the last assessment of the outcome are listed.
- Indication of whether past actions were implemented.
- Past actions since the last report listed (if applicable)

Report Phase

- Each measure includes findings (minimally the target rephrased as a finding).
- Each measure includes the total number of assessed student products (i.e., the number of products in the assessment sample).
- Each outcome assessed includes evidence of reassessment--a comparison between past and present findings (if similar measures were used and comparisons can be made).
- Each unmet target includes a specific current action.
- Past actions implemented since the last report are included (if applicable)
- Support or resources requested (if applicable)

Frequently Asked Questions

The following provides some answers to commonly asked questions. When it comes to your assessment plans and activities, there may be no single or best answer. Your school assessment coordinator, your School Assessment Committee, and the Provost's Office will work with your program to help you construct a plan that works for you.

Q. What is the difference between a goal and an outcome?

A. Both a goal and an outcome are statements about student learning. Typically, a goal is more general than an outcome, which is not only specific but also measurable.

Q. What is the difference between an outcome and an objective?

A. Generally speaking, Ramapo College uses 'outcome' more frequently than 'objective' to refer to specific, measurable statements about what we want students to know or be able to do. However, the two terms are often used interchangeably.

Q. What is the difference between direct and indirect assessment, and what are some examples of each?

A. Direct assessment examines students' actual learning, while indirect assessment typically examines students' perceptions of their learning.

Q. Is a licensure exam an appropriate assessment instrument?

A. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education considers a licensure exam a direct measure of student learning. However, this type of instrument is most helpful when a program can link parts of the exam to specific program outcomes.

Q. What if my program is externally accredited?

Externally accredited programs should develop an assessment strategy that is consistent with the needs and expectations of external accrediting bodies. This could be the Ramapo College template or it may be another format. Externally accredited programs should submit a one to two paragraph summary of their School Assessment Committee (SAC) that summarizes the program's assessment activities including actions, reassessment and loop closing.

Q. Why can't we use grades for direct assessment?

A. In the words of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education: "In and of themselves, ... grades are not direct evidence of student learning. That is, a numeric or a letter grade alone

does not express the content of what students have learned; it reflects only the degree to which the student is perceived to have learned in a specific context” (*Student Learning Assessment* 37). To learn more, read the section in the Middle States resource book starting on page 36.

Q. Why does Middle States ask institutions to assess student learning?

A. Nationally and even internationally, institutions are engaging in the assessment of student learning. Regional accrediting bodies, such as the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, are in place, in part, to ensure quality control. For instance, the federal government will not allow us to disburse federal aid without accreditation. Regional accrediting bodies are essentially peer-review bodies, meaning that they generally do not dictate (beyond federal requirements) what institutions must do but rather enable institutions to prove that they offer, among other things, quality educational experiences and services that meet generally accepted practices in higher education. In that spirit, Ramapo College conducts assessment to demonstrate, both internally and externally, its commitment to student learning.

Q. Middle States aside, what benefit is there to conducting assessment?

A. Assessment of student learning is of direct benefit to both students and faculty within a program. Your assessment will enable you to think about your curriculum holistically and allow you to fine-tune your curriculum at the program and course levels using data.

Syllabi

Q. Why does the ARC Manual ask for syllabi to include measurable student learning outcomes and to link them to assignments?

A. Measurable student learning outcomes convey to students what they should know or be able to do by the end of a course. ‘Measurable’ in this context means assessable, not necessarily quantifiable. In fact, measures may be both quantitative and qualitative. Linking outcomes to assignments conveys to students how they will demonstrate the degree to which they have mastered knowledge and skills at the level appropriate to the course. Moreover, by placing outcomes and assignments in syllabi and using a curriculum map to link course outcomes to program outcomes, a program can show the relationship between the course and the program and between course-level assessment and program-level assessment. As a result, the College can demonstrate, both internally and externally, the interrelationships between, and integration of, outcomes and assessment at every level of the institution.

Q. Should the syllabi for all sections of a particular course include the same course-level outcomes?

A. All syllabi for all sections of a particular course should include common course-level outcomes because presumably, regardless of the section or assigned instructor, the course should meet common outcomes. Otherwise, a program cannot know for certain that all students have met the program-level outcomes to which those course-level outcomes correspond, thus making programmatic assessment difficult. However, a particular section of a course may include additional outcomes that are unique to that section. In any case, outcomes indicate the general destination of the course and do not prevent a particular instructor from preparing specific lectures, giving specific assignments, and assigning specific textbooks that lead students toward those outcomes.

Q. What about using a standardized test to assess student learning?

A. We should give top billing to homegrown assessment instruments because they are authentically connected to students' actual coursework. However, standardized tests have their place. First, while homegrown assessments allow faculty to make more precise improvements in teaching and learning at the program or even course levels, standardized tests provide broad institutional data that can be benchmarked with that of other institutions. Second, standardized tests usually have high levels of reliability and validity across institutions that homegrown instruments typically do not have. Incidentally, some of the work of AAC&U including its [Essential Learning Outcomes](#) may go a long way to finding a happy compromise between the reliability and validity of standardized tests and the authenticity of homegrown assessments.

Assessment Terminology

Achievement target: The number, rate, percentage, and so forth that your program would consider an acceptable assessment finding.

Actions: What your program plans to do with your assessment results to improve teaching and learning or to improve your assessment methodology.

Assessment: A form of research designed to determine if students have in fact learned what our courses and other learning experiences are designed for them to learn.

Closing the Loop: responding to assessment results by implementing appropriate actions and determining if these actions improved student learning through comparing assessment results over time.

Curriculum map: A visual tool showing the alignment between program-level outcomes and program courses.

Direct assessment: An assessment of students' actual learning, evaluating, for example, projects and performances.

Embedded assessment: An assessment using methods already available in a course, such as a question on an exam, a group project, or a demonstration.

Evidence of Student Learning: This is a broad term to include either student products or other sources of evidence such as: survey results, scholarship on teaching learning, enrollment trends, evidence from student focus groups that are analyzed by faculty members.

Freestanding Minor: Freestanding minors are their own convening groups and are not formally part of an academic major. Freestanding minors have their own list of faculty members, academic goals, student learning outcomes and curriculum maps. Most freestanding minors range from 12 to 20 credits. Freestanding minors with 12 or more students are required to assess student learning. Assessment is optional for freestanding minors with 11 or fewer students.

Findings: Your actual assessment results.

Indirect assessment: Typically an assessment of students' perceptions of their learning, using, for instance, focus groups and surveys.

Learning outcome: A succinct statement of what you would like students to know or be able to do. Sometimes called an objective, an outcome may also refer to an attitude or a disposition. An outcome is measurable.

Learning goal: A statement about student learning that is more general than an outcome.

Measure: The tool that you plan to use to assess your selected outcome.

Reassessment: Comparing assessment results over time to analyze trends and determine whether implemented actions improved students learning.

Rubric: An assessment tool that combines assessment criteria (e.g., correct grammar) with descriptions of different levels of achievement (e.g., meets expectations: a few non-distracting mechanical errors).

Scoring Products or Evidence of Student Learning: The process by which faculty determine if a sample of students or other evidence meets convening group standards.

Student Product: what students make or faculty submit for scoring. This can be an embedded assignment like a class paper, test or quiz or something made by students like a presentation or performance.

Triangulation: More than one piece of evidence comes to the same conclusion about student learning.

Additional Resources

Ramapo College Assessment Resources

CWAAC Assessment Series

[Faculty Resource Center \(FRC\)](#)

The FRC hosts many events focusing on improving teaching and student learning.

[Institutional Research \(IR\)](#)

IR generates and houses a wide range of data that may be useful for programs including the Fact Book that has program statistics (e.g., enrollment trends), surveys of students (e.g., the National Survey and Student Engagement, the Faculty Survey on Student Engagement, Alumni Surveys and Graduating Student Surveys) and external assessment instruments (e.g., CLA+).

[Instructional Design Center \(IDC\)](#)

IDC provides training on different software and resources available on campus for conducting a range of assessments including Canvas, Google Forms or Qualtrics.

Relevant External Conferences

[AAC&U Meetings](#)

[Drexel University Annual Conference On Teaching and Learning](#)

[Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis Assessment Institute](#)

[Middle States Commission on Higher Education Annual Conferences](#)

Additional Reading

Adelman, Cliff, et al. *The Degree Qualifications Profile: A Learning-Centered Framework for What College Graduates Should Know and Be Able to Do to Earn the Associate, Bachelor's, or Master's Degree*. Indianapolis: Lumina Foundation, 2014. Lumina Foundation for Education. Web. 22 September 2015. <http://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/dqp.pdf>.

Allen, Mary J. *Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education*. San Francisco: Anker, 2004. Print.

—. *Assessing General Education Programs*. San Francisco: Anker, 2006. Print.

Association of American Colleges and Universities. *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a*

Nation Goes to College. Washington, DC: AAC&U 2002. Print.

Barkley, Elizabeth F. and Claire Howell Major. *Learning Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016. Print

Maki, Peggy. *Assessing for Learning: Building a Sustainable Commitment across the Institution*. Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2004. Print.

[Middle States Commission on Higher Education. *Student Learning Assessment: Options and Resources*. Philadelphia: MSCHE, 2007. *Middle States Commission on Higher Education*. Web. 23 August 2010.](#)

Suski, Linda. *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2018. Print

Praise for Assessment

Ramapo College's assessment activities have been praised by leading higher education entities and accrediting bodies.

The Middle States Higher Education Commission Team Report (2020):

"Ramapo College is to be commended for the progress it has made since the last self-study in the use of assessment results to improve educational effectiveness. The level of commitment to and engagement in academic program assessment and in general education assessment by Ramapo College's full-time faculty serves as a model for enhancing an authentic culture of assessment. Ramapo College has implemented a system of sustained assessment practices across programs and levels that is focused on continuous improvement and that is aligned with institutional mission and values."--Team Report, Middle States Commission on Higher Education" (p. 13)

"The team commends the process pursued by the faculty in developing Ramapo's new General Education Program. The use of data-driven assessment and coherence with the mission and strategic plan have resulted in a program well-integrated and consistent with the vision of the college."--Team Report, Middle States Commission on Higher Education (p. 9).

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) Team Report (Summer 2021):

ASB has a well-developed, comprehensive and systematic student learning outcomes assessment program that utilizes both direct and indirect assessment methods. The undergraduate program is assessed within the fourteen-course core, in which they measure student learning in five areas: communication, ethics, foundational knowledge, perspectives, and reasoning. Using a rotating schedule, they ensure assessment of each learning goal twice in a five-year period. They have a well-coordinated assessment matrix that indicates which courses will be assessed, a clear reporting format and a closing the loop retreat each semester.

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)

Under the leadership of Dr. Brian P. Chinni, Assistant Dean, and Ashley Restaino, Program Accreditation and Assessment Coordinator, the Teacher Education and Certification Program at Ramapo College underwent a thorough and scrupulous peer review process that started with the submission of a self-study report in April 2020 and culminated in a virtual site visit in December 2020. On May 14, 2021, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) issued full accreditation to Ramapo College's teacher education (TE), special education (MASE), and school leadership (MAEL) programs. All five initial-level program standards and all five advanced-level program standards were met.

The CAEP site visit team commended Ramapo's educator preparation programs for:

- Collecting, analyzing, summarizing and providing robust, valid and reliable data that demonstrates candidates meet rigorous professional standards as beginning teachers and school leaders;
- Developing, maintaining, and expanding effective, mutually beneficial partnerships with the K-12 community;
- Providing exceptional support to candidates at every stage in their programs;
- Demonstrating a commitment to recruiting and retaining diverse candidates who meet employment needs; and
- Developing and maintaining a sound quality assurance system that engages faculty and stakeholders in regularly and systematically reviewing data and making recommendations to aid in continuous improvement.

Additionally, the site visit team noted in their site visit report that, “Interviews with candidates, completers, and other stakeholders confirmed the outstanding dedication of faculty and administrators to student success, to collaboration, and to a caring atmosphere.”

The Teacher Education and Certification Program’s faculty, staff, students, alum, K-12 partners, and various other stakeholder groups played an integral role in achieving CAEP accreditation, which is known nationally for its stringent standards. The Teacher Education and Certification Program is accredited under CAEP through Spring 2027.