Academic Assessment

Handbook for Program Coordinators

Office of Institutional Effectiveness

Last revised: July 2025

More info at: https://srinfo.sulross.edu/ie/academic-assessment/

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INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

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Table of Contents

Academic Assessment Program Coordinator

Role and Responsibilities

Responsibilities

Your role, as academic program coordinator, is to be a change agent working with faculty to continue to offer improved educational experiences for all students. Your work involves collaborating with faculty in degree programs to identify quality outcomes, measure student performance, and analyze assessment data to positively impact student learning.

1. Review, analyze, and evaluate the student learning outcomes (SLOs) and assessment plan for the academic program in which you are coordinating.
   - The current assessment year for academic assessments is June 1 to May 31 or Summer to Spring.
   - Throughout the year, the academic assessment program coordinator should consider the SLOs and work with the faculty in the program to not only implement these SLOs but to collect assessment data throughout the year.

2. Use collected assessment data from program faculty to complete an annual assessment report due May 31 each year. The reports are submitted through the software, Watermark, and should be a group consensus, establishing goals for the next year.

3. Attend the annual Peer Review and other professional development and assessment training or meetings throughout the year.

4. Keep in communication with your department chair or dean regarding academic assessment in your program.

Faculty Handbook 4.01

Department chairs shall assign faculty members to serve as Program Coordinators for each academic degree program. These coordinators are responsible for leading the degree program, and they must be competent and qualified senior academics.

Your service to Sul Ross State University is greatly appreciated.

Importance of Academic Assessment

What is Assessment?

Assessment is the ongoing and systematic process of identifying objectives and means to measure them, gathering measurements of the objectives, using the information to make decisions about improvement, and implementing improvements based on the data gathered. Academic assessment program coordinators understand the usefulness of such information and inspire others to engage in this continuous cycle of improvement.

Purpose of Assessment

1. **To improve** – The assessment process should provide feedback to determine how the academic program can enhance current practices to improve student learning.

2. **To inform** – The assessment process should inform department heads and other decision-makers of the contributions and impact of the academic program to the development and growth of students.

3. **To prove** – The assessment process should encapsulate and demonstrate what the academic program has done throughout the year in progressing student learning toward successful completion of degree requirements.

4. **To support** – The assessment process should provide support for academic planning and decision-making activities such as academic program reviews, new program creation, strategic planning, as well as external accountability activities such as accreditation.
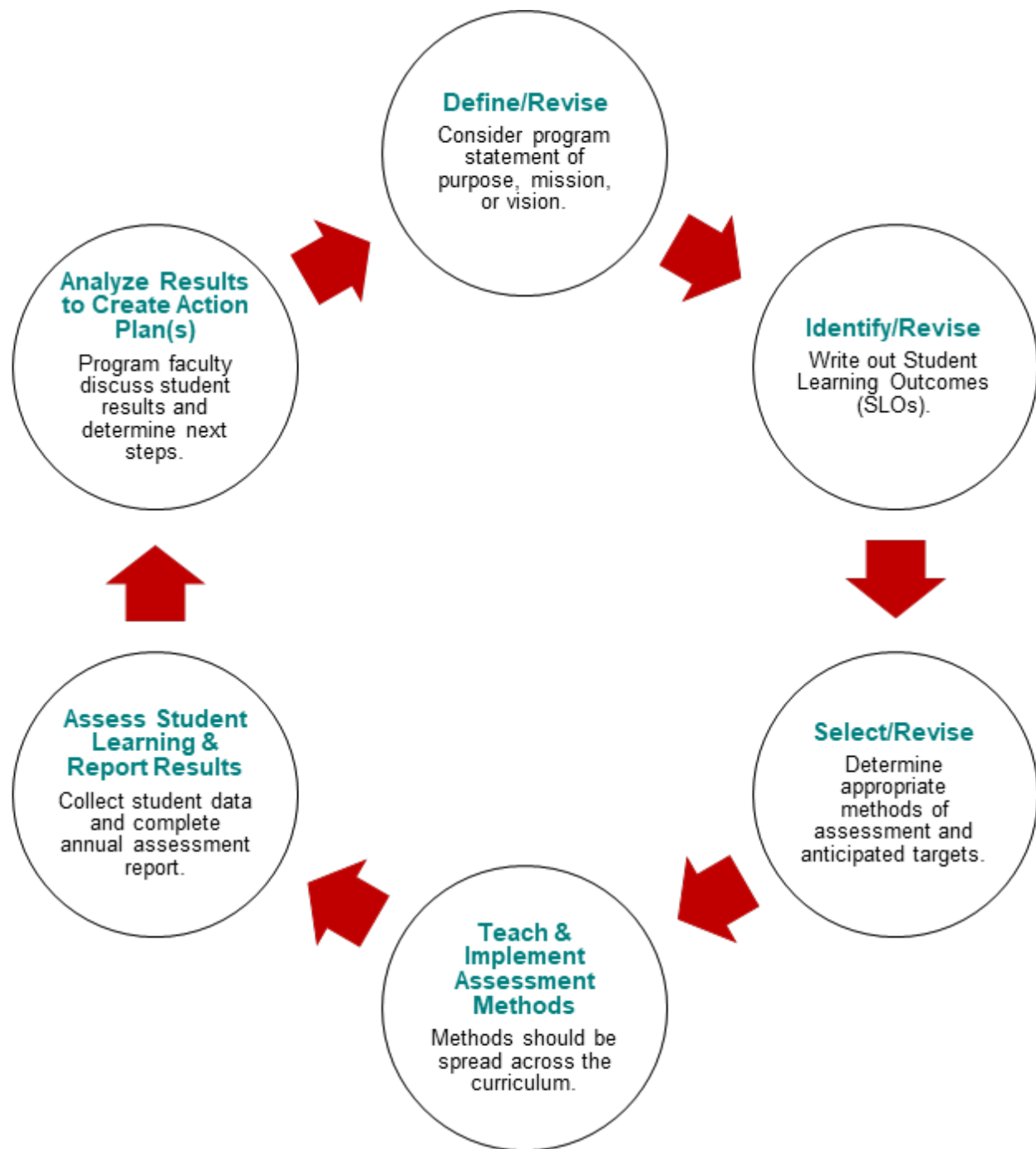
Supporting Accreditation Requirements
SACSCOC 8.2.a

The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results for student learning outcomes for each of its education programs.

The expectation is that the institution reports the following:

1. Data that indicates the extent to which the outcomes are achieved.
2. Evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the outcomes.

The Sul Ross Academic Assessment Process

Define/Revise
Consider program statement of purpose, mission, or vision.

Identify/Revise
Write out Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

Select/Revise
Determine appropriate methods of assessment and anticipated targets.

Teach & Implement Assessment Methods
Methods should be spread across the curriculum.

Assess Student Learning & Report Results
Collect student data and complete annual assessment report.

Analyze Results to Create Action Plan(s)
Program faculty discuss student results and determine next steps.

This six-step cycle promotes continuous improvement.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

A student learning outcome (SLO) comes with the expectation that when a student completes all of the prescribed degree requirements they will successfully be able to demonstrate their knowledge through the intent of the learning outcome (Texas Woman's University, 2024).
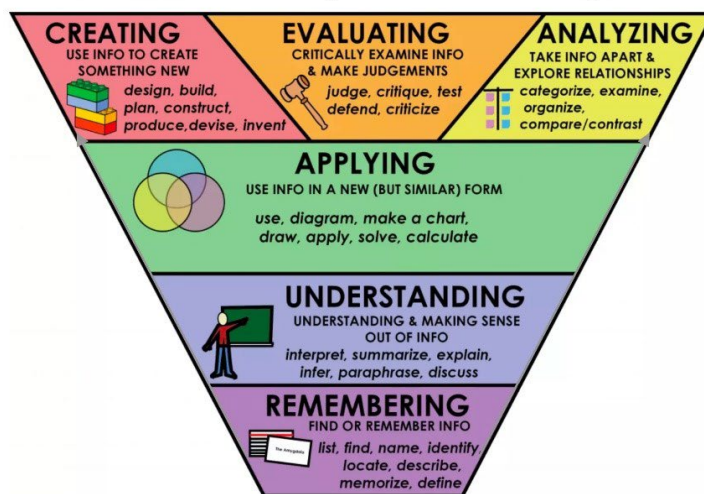
Illustration: Rawia Inaim

Posted by @addyosmani

Blooms Taxonomy of Action Verbs is extremely helpful in crafting successful SLOs.

Crafting an Effective SLO

- Clearly describe and define expected abilities, knowledge, values, and/or attitudes of the graduates of the program.
- Structure so that two or more measures can be used to assess each SLO.
    o Be specific and measurable.
- Reflects key and crucial learning components of the program.

Try out the ABCC method/formula. **Actor + Behavior + Condition + Criterion.**

Examples from Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis

- Students will explain how the science of exercise affects stress.
- Students will design a grounded research study using the scientific method.
- Students will demonstrate the use of correct grammar and various literary devices in creating an essay.

Assessment Methods

Outcomes desired of students' achievement at the end of their tenure are built into coursework all along the way (Kuh et al., 2014).

Methods include:

- Exams
- Assignments
- Case Studies
- Papers
- Internship reports/projects

- Portfolios
- Surveys
- Presentations
- And more!

Methods help identify where improvement is needed and where gaps in student learning, understanding, or application apply.

Assessment Method Formula

At *(time),* the students in *(course)* will *(describe activity).*

Examples of Assessment Methods

- At the end of the semester, students in SRSU 1101 will select a research topic and write a literature review.
- At the beginning and end of the semester, students in SRSU 1202 will take a short quiz over subjects to be or taught in the course to analyze growth over the course of the semester.

Assessment Targets

- Targets must be clear and are often determined by percentages rather than letter grades.
- Target percentages of achievement should be set based on realistic expectations (e.g., 85% passing rate).
- Targets can be (and are ideally) multi-faceted (e.g., 80% of students will achieve an 85% passing rate).
- Strong targets will always be tied to a rubric that may be consistently applied from one assessment cycle to the next.

Assessment Target Formula

Using *(rubric),* faculty will set a target of *(percentage, points, etc.).*

Examples of Assessment Formulas

- Using the "Research Papers" rubric, 80% of students will score a 90% or higher.
- Using the "Oral Presentations" rubric, 90% of students will score a 3 on the rubric for acceptable presentation skills.

NOTE: All rubrics used should be shared across the academic program and uploaded into the Watermark system for transparency in data collection and reporting.

Crafting an Assessment Plan

An assessment plan is created by the academic program coordinators will the assistance of the program faculty. These plans include the following:

3	**Outcomes**	A minimum of three outcomes is required, but a program may wish to increase this.
2	**Measures**	Each outcome should have a minimum of one but mostly two measures assigned.
1	**Targets**	Each measure should have no more than one corresponding target.

Completing the Annual Assessment Report

An annual assessment report is primarily composed of two components.

Clear, detailed, and understandable results for each method (from specific courses) and how these results compare to the anticipated target.

An evaluation of what worked or didn't work that semester concerning the method. This analysis is crucial to understanding areas of improvement.

Reporting Student Data

Outcomes – Measure Results

For each measure, assigned to each outcome, assessment coordinators must include detailed results, analysis of results, and plans for the upcoming year.

When writing results, consider the following:

- Results should address the outcomes and be directly related to the method being reported on.
- The extent to which the target was met or not met.
- How might the faculty collaborate further to enhance the method/course and overall outcome?
- How many students were assessed in the course? Was the same course, same method taught in multiple sections or semesters throughout the assessment year (e.g., fall and spring cohorts)?

See page 12 for details on how the various ways in which results may be reported in Watermark.

Analysis of Measures

Outcomes – Measure Analysis

For each measure, you may find that at the end of the year, the results proved successful in meeting the target or unsuccessful in meeting the target. Thus, an analysis is required for each measure to determine where the program faculty may improve on a component of the measure to ensure or sustain student success. It is also beneficial for these results to be compared one year to the next. How did students improve in meeting the target since the previous year?

Remember that the entire assessment plan is set by the program faculty and reported on by the academic assessment program coordinator. Though SRSU's accreditors, SACSCOC, require "evidence of seeking improvement," they do not define improvement for institutions, let alone individual programs.

Here are some ways in which seeking improvement may be documented in the analysis, and what action plans could come from this.

Analysis of Results	Action Plans
Students met expectations by the third and fourth formal observation opportunities. To provide students with greater opportunity for success through their formal observations, the faculty will meet with the class as a whole prior to scheduled observations and do a run-through, offering students samples of previous successful presentations.	• Implement class meetings prior to scheduled observations to do a run-through of observations. • Prepare samples of previous successful presentations to share with students.
Student scores on the final exam decreased by 25% since last year. The faculty believe this decrease was caused by a confusion in components that would be included in the final exam. Many students expressed frustration that the final exam did not match what they had studied for.	• Clearly state on the course syllabus that the final exam will be a comprehensive review. The instructor for this course will mention this to the students verbally (in-person course) during the first week of classes. • We will maintain the target and method for another semester to see if these strategies to alert students in advance that the final exam will be comprehensive, improve student scores to meet the target in the next year.

Analysis of Outcomes

Outcomes Analysis

Academic assessment program coordinators, along with program faculty, were asked to assess the overall effectiveness of the outcomes themselves. Do the current student learning outcomes meet market demands, student needs, or trends in the field of study?

When reporting results and analysis of outcome-measures, it may be evident whether or not the outcomes themselves are being met or not met, based on whether the measures are met or not.

Here are some ways in which seeking improvement may be documented in the analysis, and what action plans could come from this.

Analysis of an Outcome	Action Plans

In an effort to analyze the students' ability to design a grounded research study using the scientific method, students were successful in composing the literature review and methodology (Measure A) but struggled when it came to data analysis (Measure B).	• To ensure that students understand all components of the scientific method necessary for a grounded research study, the instructor for SRSU 3303 will:
	  ○ Stretch the data analysis module into three weeks instead of two
	  ○ Require office hours the week before the data analysis assignment is due

For the outcome "Students will demonstrate the use of correct grammar and various literary devices in creating an essay", we successfully met both measures this assessment cycle. While students met the target, the faculty noticed that the overall student progress on Measure A's target of 85% on the Research Paper rough draft was met by 87% whereas last year the target was met with 92%. This indicates a 5% decrease.	• Next academic year, the faculty will require students to submit their papers to Tutor.com or visit one of the in-house tutors a minimum of two times during the semester. We will then determine if this additional step, along with in-class instruction, improves students' grammar and use of literary devices.

See page 12 for a list of action plan options provided in Watermark.

Watermark's Action Plan Suggestion Bank

- Revise Curriculum
- Restructure Outcome Statement
- Revise Measurement/Assessment
- Gather Additional Data
- Revise Benchmark/Target
- Implement New Program or Services
- Community Partnership
- Modify Position/Personnel
- Modify Policies/Procedures
- Adopt or Expand Technologies
- Additional Training
- Collaborate With Another Department/Unit/Program
- Modify Physical Environment
- Maintain Assessment Strategy
- Other

Additional Vocabulary

Closing the Loop

The cyclical process beginning with student learning outcomes, followed by assessment, and identifying areas or strengths and weaknesses to address in the future.

Curriculum Mapping

Process used to track in which courses concepts related to the outcomes are introduced, reinforced, or assessed.

Scoring Rubrics

A scoring guide used to evaluate the quality of students' constructed responses. It is valued for the faculty to maintain objectivity in grading, and it is valuable for the students to understand what the standards of performance for an assignment are.

Using the Watermark Platform for Administrative Assessment Reports

Log in with Single Sign-On (SSO) at https://srinfo.sulross.edu/ie/academic-assessment/. Select the Planning & Self-Study option.

Assessing a Plan

For every Program that a Coordinator is assigned to as a Lead, there will be a Program card listed on the user's home page.
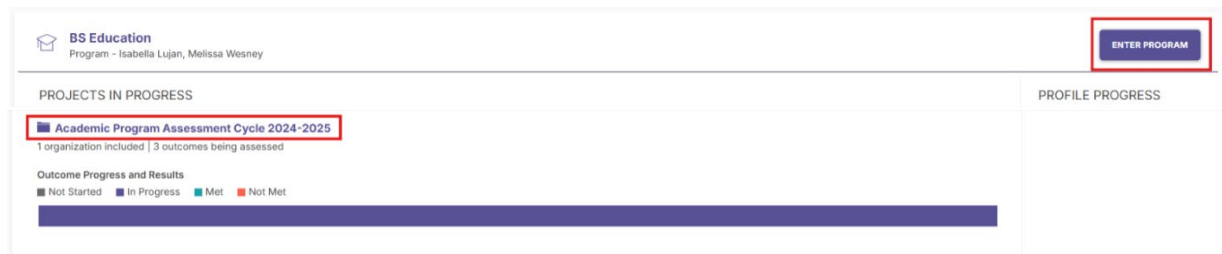
The Program Card as presented on the user's home page.

The Program card presents two options for accessing the Plan.

1. On the Program card, there is a section titled "Projects in Progress". If the Plan is still open, it will be listed here, and the user can click on its name to enter it. (skip to the bottom of page 2 in this handbook)
2. Alternatively, the user can click **Enter Program** to be brought into the Programs area. From here, there will also be an **In Progress** tab on the left, under which any open Plan can be selected.
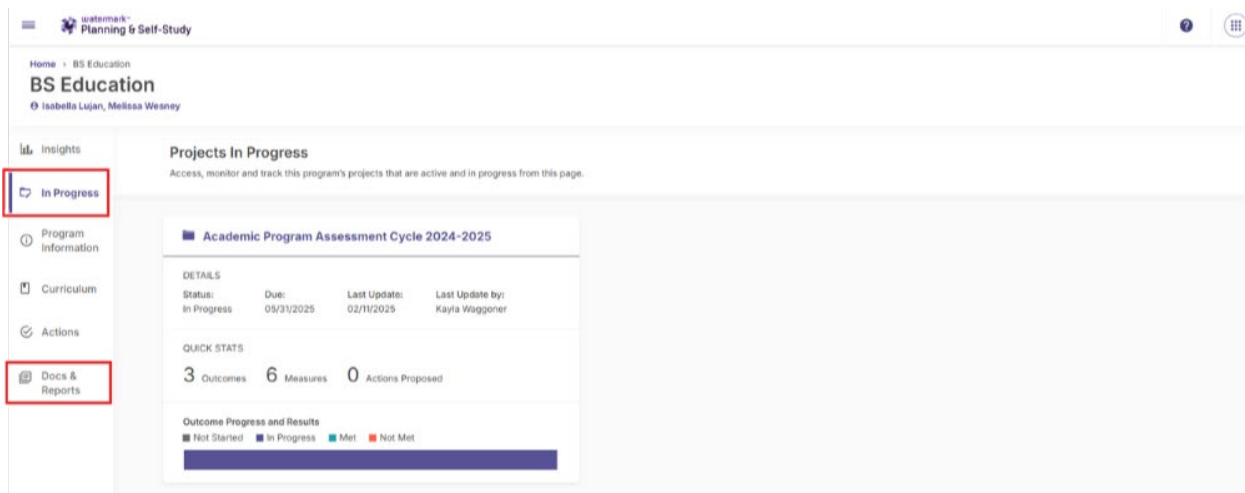
The Program area, with In Progress and Docs & Reports tabs highlighted.

Note - if the Plan has been closed, a report containing its data can be located in this area, under the **Docs & Reports tab.*

Entering Results, Findings, and Actions in an Assessment Plan
To begin, select the **Academic Assessment Cycle 2024-2025**

For a new assessment cycle you will need to **Select Outcomes** that you are assessing (All should be selected unless otherwise discussed with Institutional Effectiveness).

Select the Outcomes and select **Apply Selection**

Drop down the Outcome you wish to add results to and click the **Add Results** button for the Measure.

This will present a page from which the Results format can be selected.

Please note that you may not see all of the following options, based on the type of Outcome assessed and details associated with the Measure.

Please note that, while you cannot change the Results method without deleting the data that has already been collected, the Results that were entered for the chosen method can be edited at a later point. In other words, if the option to enter Counts is selected, the actual Counts themselves can be edited later on.

Results Options Explained:

- **I want to upload the assessment results files**: This will allow the user to upload a data file as evidence. *(Optional)*

If selecting, **I want to upload the assessment results files, Files** tab, click the **Upload New File** button. This will produce the computer's file directory, from which a single or multiple files can be selected for upload.

After the file(s) is uploaded, it will appear with options to download or remove it.

There is also the option of the **Summary** tab, where additional Narrative information relevant to the Results can be added. *(Required)*

- **I want to enter the count of students who meet/do not meet the criteria**: This option allows the users to enter the number of students who met or did not meet criteria for outcome achievement, and those results will display as a data graphic. A single record of Counts can be added, or an individual Count can be documented per Course Section.

If selecting, **I want to enter the count of students who meet/do not meet the criteria**, choose how counts will be reported. If selecting "Overall counts for this measure activity" this will allow you to fill in the counts for the course associated with the measure and click **View Results**, as shown below. Files and Summaries can also be included.

If selecting, "Counts for each section" within **I want to enter the count of students who meet/do not meet the criteria**, click **Enter Counts** to include counts for each section of the course associated with the measure, as shown below. Files and Summaries can also be included.

This will present a page from which the counts can be entered for each section of the course associated with the measure.

- **Collect results from another system:** This option allows adding Results that were collected in Blackboard Ultra OR from additional Watermark products.
  - For information on adding Results from Blackboard, please click HERE.
  - For information on adding Results from Course Evaluations & Surveys, please click HERE.

Collect results from another system

Select how the results will be collected   ×

Fields marked with * are required.

Select whether you would like to collect results from another system yourself, or send a request to faculty to collect and submit results.*

○ **I want to collect results myself**

Select this option if you would like to bring in results from other Watermark products or a Learning Management System you have credentials to.

○ **I want to send a request to faculty**

Select this option if you would like Faculty members to bring in results from a Learning Management System they have credentials to.

If selecting, **Collect results from another system,** two options will present on the right-hand side. If selecting "I want to collect results myself" click **Next**. Selecting this option will allow you to bring in results from other Watermark products or Blackboard you have credentials to.

Collect results from another system > Select Source

Align Results   ×

Program: BS Education   Outcome: Lesson Planning

Fields marked with * are required.

Select where your results will be coming from. Next, you can select the specific type of results you need. You will be able to filter your results later.

Source*

Select an Option   ^

Blackboard Learn

Outcomes Assessment Projects

Student Learning & Licensure

Watermark Course Evaluations & General Surveys

Alternatively, if selecting "I want to send a request to faculty" from "**I want to align results from another system",** click **Next**. Selecting this option will allow other Faculty members to bring in results from Blackboard they have credentials to. Once a course section is selected and a due date is entered click **Submit Collection Request**.

Collect results from another system › Faculty to submit results from an LMS system

Send a collection request to faculty

×

Fields marked with * are required.

Select the course section to collect assigment results from. This also determines what instructor(s) receive this collection request.

Course Section*

Select a course section ⌄

Don't see your course section? Contact your Admin about adding enrollment data to the system.

Instructor(s)

Instructors will populate based on enrollment data from the course section.

Due Date

mm/dd/yyyy 📅

BACK   SUBMIT COLLECTION REQUEST

Analyzing Results with Findings

Once the Results have been documented, the next step is to enter the Findings.
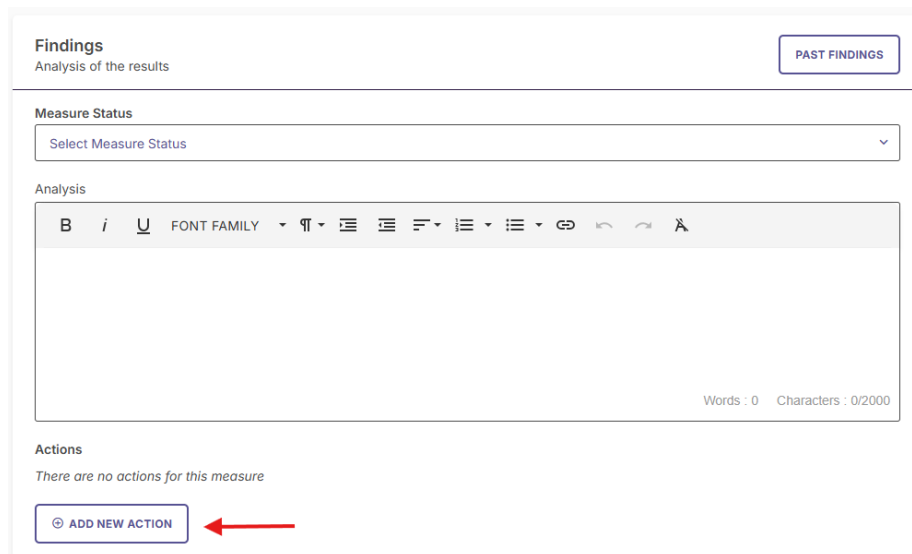

The first option in this category is to document the Measure Status for this Measure. From the dropdown menu, a user can select whether the criteria for this Measure was Met or Not Met, based on the Results.

After selecting the Measure Status, there is the option to enter a narrative Analysis, as shown in the screenshot above.
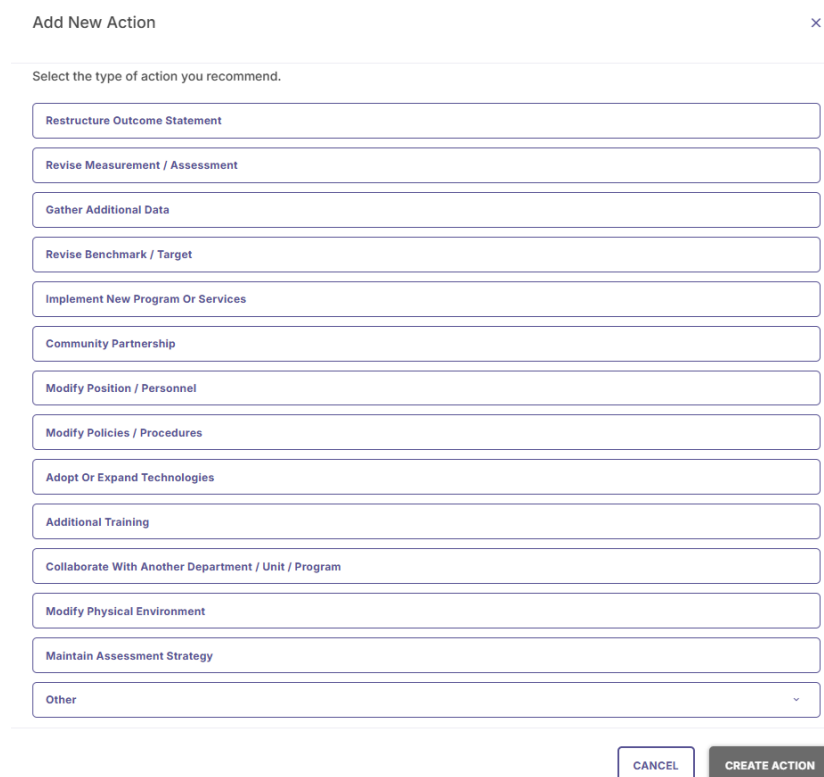
To view **Past Findings**, there would have to be previous years built out in Watermark. As of April 2025, Institutional Effectiveness has worked to import 2022 and 2023 Outcomes and Measures; however, not all previous data will be accessible to compare.

Adding Actions

Once Results and Findings have been documented, you have the opportunity to create Actions, thereby closing the loop on assessment planning. Selecting **Add Actions** under the Measure title will begin the process.

This will open the Actions panel on the right-hand side of the page, in which the user would select the type of Action they would like to document:

Once the Type is selected, the Action Status, Description, and optional Due Date can be entered.

Add New Action   ×

Action Type
Adopt or Expand Technologies

✎ Change Action Type

Status

| Not Started ˅ |

Action Description*

| Describe your recommended Action |

Recommended Due Date

| mm/dd/yyyy 📅 |

Once the Action is created, it will appear below the Findings entry area. Actions can be edited or deleted at any time by selecting either the Edit or Delete options to the right of the Action Name.

Actions   ☐ Hide completed actions   **Sort By** | Most Recent ˅ |

▼ **Revise Curriculum**   ✎ 🗑

Status
In Progress

Plan
Academic Program Assessment Cycle 2024-2025

Description
Work with Chair to revise curriculum

⊕ **Add New Update**

Once the Results, Findings, and Actions are added, select **Save & Close** in the top-right.

SAVE & CLOSE

Analyze Outcomes

After all Outcome's Measures have been created, and their Results, Findings, and Actions have been documented, an overall Analysis of the Outcome itself may be desired.

This will present an Outcome Analysis text entry area, as well as an Outcome Status drop-down.

The Outcome Analysis area allows for relevant Narrative to be added, while the Outcome Status drop-down is where users would select whether the institution met or did not meet the criteria called for by the Outcome.

Lastly, there will also be the opportunity to document any Actions that are not specifically tied to a Measure.

Reviewing and Submitting

After all Outcomes are updated click **Review and Submit** in the top-right.

REVIEW AND SUBMIT
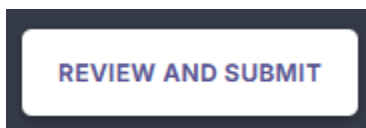
Review your assessment report for this Program. You can continue to edit in the outcomes workspace by clicking **Edit**. Once satisfied with all reported, click **Submit.** Once submitted, you will still be able to edit this report until it is permanently closed by Institutional Effectiveness. Submitting will allow you to comment to reviewers and tag administrators.

For any questions you may have, please contact the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at ie@sulross.edu or 432-837-8224.

For more Watermark Resources, visit:

[Creating an Assessment Plan](#)

[Accessing the Assessment Plan](#)

[Selecting Outcomes to Include in a Plan](#)

[Adding Measures to an Outcome](#)

[Measures - Editing, Revising, Removing, Deleting](#)

[How to Enter Results, Findings, and Actions in an Assessment Plan](#)

Support

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Use and Navigation of the Watermark Platform

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Assessment Strategies, Report Writing, and Training

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Works Cited

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