ASSESSMENT PLANNING MATRIX

by Gloria Rogers, PhD

Being able to communicate your assessment plan is critical to the continuous improvement process. It not only enables programs to document and monitor their assessment processes, but it also provides a way to communicate the process and results to both internal and external audiences.

There is no one way to document and report your results; the matrix below is just one example. However, when developing your continuous improvement process related to student learning, it is important that the process is presented in a way that demonstrates an understanding of the key elements in an assessment plan. The report should also provide findings, actions, and the results of those actions. The document should be updated when necessary as the plan will evolve over time as actions taken will require modifications of the plan. The use of trend data to document the progress of student learning over time in graphical or tabular format is also helpful to monitor program progress.

The example below would require one document for each of the student outcomes. The definitions of each of the terms used in the table are found on Page 3. The planning matrix should be adjusted to ensure that it meets the programs' needs. For example, a program may not be doing a formalized process of formative assessment and would not include this column. As defined in the glossary, formative assessment is taken early in the program to identify any actions that should be taken before the cohort completes the program. Whether or not formative assessment is part of the formal assessment program generally depends on the maturity the program assessment process.

Example of an Assessment Planning Matrix

Student Outcome _____

Performance Indicators	Educational Strategies	Where Formative Data are Collected	Where Summative Data are Collected	Method(s) of Assessment	Time of Summative Data Collection	Threshold for Performance

Results _____ (date):

Actions _____ (date):

Second-Cycle Results _____ (date):

Glossary of Terms:

Student Outcomes: Student outcomes describe what students are expected to know, do or demonstrate by the time of program completion. These relate to the knowledge, skills, and personal attributes that students acquire as they progress through the program.

Performance Indicators: Performance indicators are measurable statements which define the specific characteristics students should demonstrate as evidence of the desired attainment of the student outcomes.

Educational Strategies: The courses or activities that are designed to provide opportunities for students to learn, practice, demonstrate and/or get feedback on their performance on the performance indicators. The mapping of these strategies to the performance indicators identify how the curriculum and co-curriculum is aligned with the performance indicators for the intended outcome.

Where Formative Data are Collected: Formative data are those data that are collected early in the program to determine the level at which student are demonstrating the performance indicators related to the student outcome. Formative data identify the students' strengths and weaknesses related to the student outcome. The results enable proactive actions and are used in follow-on courses to improve student learning.

Where Summative Data are Collected: Summative data are the data that are collected at or near the end of the program to document student attainment of the outcome. These data are used to identify whether the program has attained the desired level of student performance related to the outcomes. The program will utilize the results to take actions to improve the program where necessary.

Methods of Assessment: The assessments that are used to assess student learning.

Time of Summative Data Collection: Identifies when the assessment data will be collected.

Threshold of Performance: The minimum level of acceptable performance related to the summative data.

Results: Report of the data collection, analysis and results of the assessment process.

Actions: Based on the findings, the actions taken which have been recommended to improve student performance.

Second-Cycle Results: The results based on assessment after taking action on earlier recommendations.