



University of Central Florida

# Designing an Assessment System to Enhance Program Quality

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SACS COC Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation



July 29, 2008

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## Overview

- Role of assessment
- Focus on a system
- Management objectives for assessment
- Program assessment process design
- Quality assurance of the assessment process
- Scheduling to systematize assessment
- System support requirements
- Summary of program assessment system characteristics

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## The University of Central Florida

*Stands for Opportunity*

- Established in 1963 (first classes in 1968), Metropolitan Research University
- Grown from 1,948 to 48,897 students
  - 41,632 undergrads and 7,265 grads
  - Eleven colleges
  - 12 regional campus sites
  - 6<sup>th</sup> largest public university in U.S.
  - 89% of lower division and 67% of upper division students are full-time
- Carnegie classification:
  - Undergraduate: Professions plus arts & sciences, high graduate coexistence
  - Graduate: Comprehensive doctoral (no medical) [Medical college approved]
- 92 Bachelors, 97 Masters, 3 Specialist, 28 PhD, 1 MD programs
- Largest undergraduate enrollment in state
- Approximately 1,300 full-time faculty; 9,800 total employees



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## What Is Assessment?

- Where do we use the term “assessment” in higher education?
  - Assess student learning
  - Assess student development
  - Classroom assessment
  - Assess the quality of programs
  - Assess the quality of support services
  - Assess university or college performance
- Why do we conduct assessment?
  - Measure performance

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## Why Measure?

- Suppose
  - Performance Target: 95% of students from program X will graduate with a strong knowledge in Y as evidenced by performance on course embedded exam questions
  - Result: 80% achievement
- Then What?
- Summative Response: “That is poor performance”
- Formative Response: “We are going to make improvements to the curriculum”

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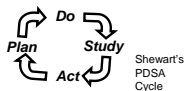
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## Assessment for Continuous Quality Improvement

- Formative process
- Continuous



- Focused on improvement
  - Student learning
  - Student development
  - Institution and its people

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## Important to Clearly Separate Formative from Summative Uses

- If assessment is being used for improvement purposes
  - Do not use the assessment results to judge
  - Do not punish programs for not making their targets
  - Do require programs to take actions to improve
  - Do provide rewards for having an excellent **assessment PROCESS**
- Try to use different terms to distinguish
  - Assessment = formative
  - Evaluation, accountability, accreditation = summative

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## Levels of Assessment

- Classroom assessment
  - Assessment of individual student's performance within a course by an instructor
- Course assessment
  - Assessment of how well a course is meeting student learning outcomes
- Program assessment
  - Assessment of how well an academic program or educational support program is meeting student learning and/or program outcomes
- Institutional assessment
  - Assessment of how well an institution is meeting its objectives

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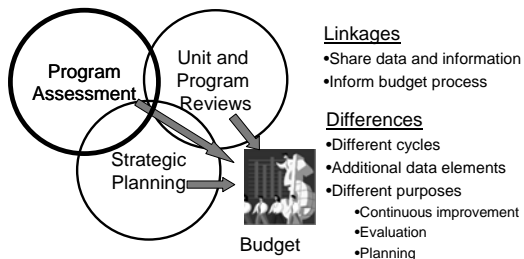
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## Systems Supporting Program Improvement



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## What Programs Within the Institution Should Do It?

- Educational programs should conduct formative assessments of student learning, and of research and service
  - All levels: Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral
  - All disciplines and special programs (e.g., General Education)
- Administrative and educational support services should conduct formative assessment of their operations, processes, and programs
  - Admissions, student support offices, administrative support offices, budget offices, computer technology support office, library

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## Evidence of Program Assessment SUCCESS

- **S**incerity means people trust the process
- **U**sefulness means the process helps people
- **C**larity means people understand the process
- **C**ommitment means people believe in the process and leaders support the process
- **E**nthusiasm means people want to do it
- **S**ystemic and **S**ustainable means everyone is continuing to use it
- **S**upported means people are not on their own

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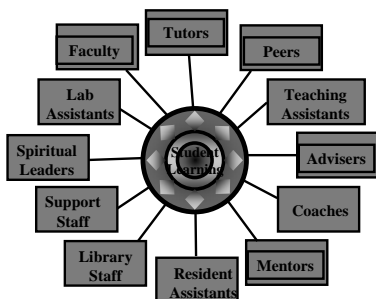
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## Student Learning is Complex



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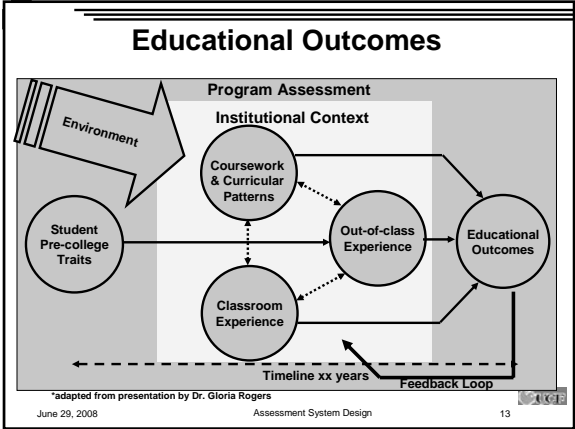
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- ### The Focus of Assessment Training
- How to do it!
    - Define student learning and program outcomes
    - Create curriculum map
    - Develop relevant measures
    - Design measurement instruments
    - Conduct measures
    - Analyze results
    - Determine improvement actions
    - Take action and follow-up
  - What is missing?
    - How to create a system to ensure that program assessment takes place and is done well throughout the institution
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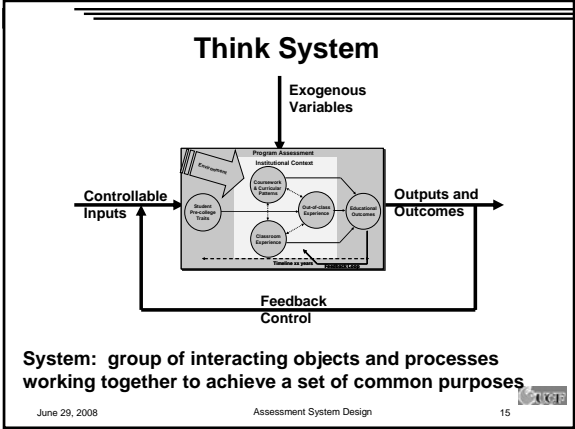
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## Program Assessment System Features

- Desired outcomes
  - Active participation by everyone
  - Participants feel supported
  - Produces useful results
  - Etc.
- Interacting components and processes
  - Program assessment process and timelines
  - Quality assurance process
  - Support systems

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## Essential Program Assessment System Elements

- Management objectives for program assessment system
- Process design: content, focus, and mechanics of the program assessment process
- Quality assurance (QA) process
- Schedules and timelines for program assessment
- Support and documentation

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## Choosing Management Objectives

- Focused on improvement
- Everyone engaged
- Accountable for doing assessment
- Rewarded for good assessment process
- Requires taking actions
- Supported by institution

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## Management Objectives for the Program Assessment System

- Determine purpose of program assessment
  - Accountability or program improvement or both
- Determine management focus
  - Assessment outcomes or process or both
- Determine management involvement level
  - Participation or oversight or both
- Determine management structures
  - Centralized or decentralized or both

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## Mechanics of Assessment

- To improve, you need to know where you are today and where you would like to go
  - Mission (purpose)
  - Vision (where you would like to go)
  - Objectives (what you need to achieve in order to get there)
  - Measures (how well you are currently doing)
- To improve, you need to take action
  - Analyze your program or operations to determine changes
  - Plan the changes
  - Take action
- "Close the loop"



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## Selecting a Model

- Popular model—Nichol's 5-step approach
  - *Mission, Outcomes, Measures, Results, Actions*
- Why require a common model?
  - Eliminates ambiguity
  - Makes planning easier
  - Makes training easier
  - Standardizes the documentation
  - Easier for "evaluators" to examine the documentation
  - Helps increase the comfort level

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## ...And Then Implement

- Who is required to conduct assessment?
  - Academic departments, academic programs, divisions
- What do you assess?
  - Student outcomes, academic processes, student services
- When do you conduct assessment?
  - Triennially, annually, semesterly, monthly
- Where?
  - Main campus, regional campuses, Web delivery
- Why?
  - Scope of use
- How?
  - Portfolios, surveys, institutional data, standardized tests

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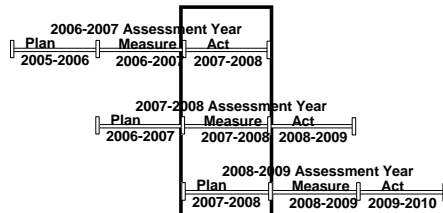
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## Scheduling Assessment

- If you want measures completed every year



- Communicating this concept is a major challenge

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## Essential Program Assessment System Elements

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## Assuring the Quality of the Assessment Process

- Quality assurance is needed to ensure that the units and programs are following the process and doing it well
- QA may serve multiple purposes
  - Process leadership and/or management
  - Monitoring function
  - Feedback to improve the process
  - Training
  - Support
  - Consultations

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## General QA Principles

- Ideally you build in quality through
  - Training
  - Defined process
  - Consultations
  - Support
- At a minimum you need to assess the assessment process
  - Inspection or sampling process
  - Feedback to the unit or program

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## Implementing QA

- Setting goals for QA: cannot ask for complete, correct, and meaningful plans all at once
  - Stage 1—Did everyone turn in documentation with all of the required pieces?
  - Stage 2—Are the pieces there and are they done correctly?
  - Stage 3—Are the pieces there, done correctly, and are they meaningful?
- Cannot force all programs to be at the same level
  - New programs or change in staffing

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## Implementing a QA Process

- Determine what you will monitor
  - Every piece, each major step, or completed cycle
- Determine how you will monitor
  - Inspection or sampling
- Choice of method depends on resources and...
  - QA process chosen (checklist or other)
  - What you monitor
  - Number of programs and units in the institution
  - How you structure the QA function
- Determine how to obtain the documentation
  - Submission or on-site inspection
- Determine the schedule for the reviews

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## Assessment Cycle



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## Focus of QA (each major step)

- Assessment plans
  - Content of the mission statement
  - Alignment and quality of the outcome statements
  - Alignment and choice of assessment methods
- Assessment results
  - Documentation of the results
  - Documentation of the planned and/or implemented changes
- Overall
  - Is assessment making a difference?

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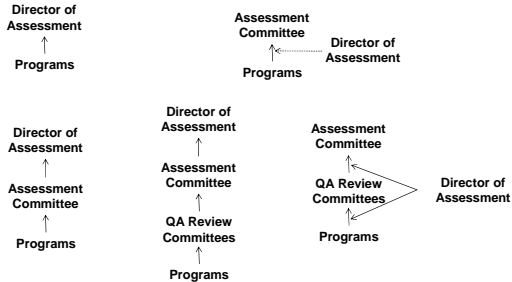
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## Organizational Structures



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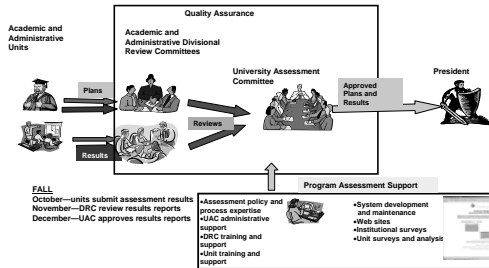
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## Organization and Work Flow

**SPRING**  
February—units submit assessment plans  
March—DRC review plans  
May—UAC approves plans



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## Essential Program Assessment System Elements

- Management objectives for program assessment system
- Process design: content, focus, and mechanics of the program assessment process
- Quality assurance (QA) process
- Schedules and timelines for program assessment
- Support and documentation

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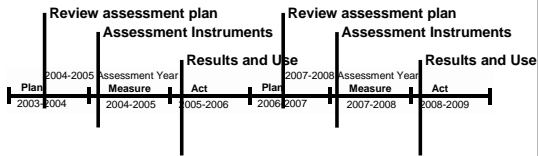
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## Implementation of QA on a Serial Assessment Process



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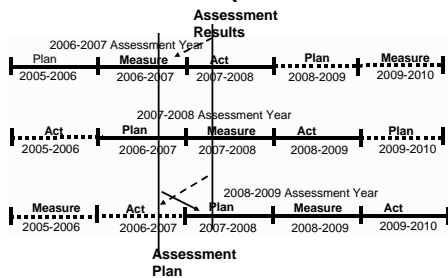
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## QA Implementation on a Parallel Assessment Process (Dual Submission)



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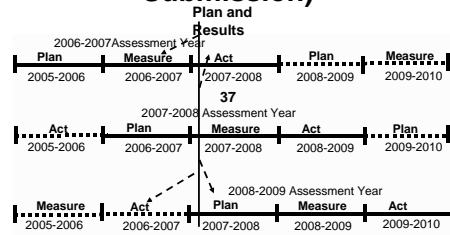
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## QA Implementation on a Parallel Assessment Process (Single Submission)



Report on results from previous year, planned use of results in current year, actual use of results in previous year, and assessment plan for current year




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## Essential Program Assessment Process Elements

- Management objectives for program assessment system
- Process design: content, focus, and mechanics of the program assessment process
- Quality assurance (QA) process
- Schedules and timelines for program assessment
- Support and documentation




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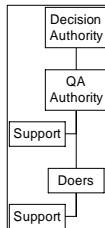
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## Support for Whom? By Whom?

- Support for the “doers”
  - Training and consultations
  - Surveys and assessment instruments
  - Analysis of processes
  - Assessment clinics
- Support for the QA authority function
  - Administrative
  - Communication
  - Training
  - Technical




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## Creating Assessment Support

- Create a support entity
- Establish partnerships with existing support
  - Institutional Research—surveys
  - College of Education—rubrics
  - Faculty Center—training
- Establish forum for communications and information exchanges
- Find ways to reduce workload
  - Templates
  - Web-enabled systems
  - Survey support

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## Training is Essential

- More than a one-time event
  - Repeated and reinforced
- How to let people know how or what to do
  - Training workshops
  - Individual consultations
  - Train-the-trainer approach
  - Written instructions and guidelines
  - Feedback from reviews of submitted materials
  - Bring in consultants

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## Recognition

- “Celebrate” assessment success
- Conduct assessment fairs
  - Show off good work
- Provide support for personal development
  - Training
  - Courses
  - Assessment conferences
- Provide “best practice” recognition or awards

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## Assessment Documentation

- Documentation of the assessment process is required for reaffirmation of accreditation
- Documentation is needed for the QA function to do its job: improve the assessment process
- Challenges
  - Making it meaningful
    - Balance between too much and too little
  - Making it easy
    - Templates
  - Making it accessible
    - QA function
  - Making it flexible to accommodate innovative approaches

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## Considerations When Developing a Documentation System

- Assessment process
  - What elements need to be documented?
- Quality assurance
  - Will you have a QA process and what will you document?
- Timelines
  - When do individuals do the submissions and reviews?
  - What type of history needs to be maintained?
- Access
  - Who gets access to what elements?
  - How do you maintain security?

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## Web-based Technologies Can...

- Assist in submission process
  - Assessment plans easily retrieved and revised
  - Assessment results submitted via the web
- Assist in review processes
  - Reviewers can easily access the plans and results
  - The reviews of plans and results can be submitted via the web
- Assist in retrieval of assessment information
  - Assessment plans
  - Assessment results
  - Assessment reviews
  - Surveys and other assessment data

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# WEAVEonline™

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# AMS by TaskStream

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## Summary of Program Assessment System Characteristics

- Design a program assessment system
  - Clearly defined content, schedule, and review process
- Develop manageable pieces
  - Assessment plan and assessment results
- Minimize administrative workload for participants
  - Easy on-line submissions and reviews
  - Institutional surveys supporting assessment plans
  - Training and assistance
- Produce useful results
  - Improve student learning outcomes
  - Close the loop and share best practices

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## Questions

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