

# Assessing the Major

**Bob Smallwood**  
University of Alabama

SACS Summer Institute  
July, 2008  
Orlando



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## Presentation Outline

### I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan To Assess Student Learning in the Major

- Identify some best practices
- Reference some useful resources
- Highlight some favorite assessment practices

### II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Majors Should Know & Be Able To Do (Content Knowledge)

- Approach that includes all departmental faculty

### III. Evaluating the Quality & Completeness of Departmental Assessment Plans

- Share couple of samples of evaluation forms



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### I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan To Assess Student Learning in the Major

Useful Resource: **Program Assessment Handbook**  
University of Central Florida  
[http://ceas.ucf.edu/doc/acad\\_assess\\_handbook.pdf](http://ceas.ucf.edu/doc/acad_assess_handbook.pdf)



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I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan  
To Assess Student Learning in the Major  
Mission

According to Susan Hatfield (Idea Paper #35),

- to some "a mission is essentially a slogan"
- to others "a mission is a statement of core values"
- to others "a mission should be a long statement"
- to others "a mission should be no longer than a sentence or two"
- to others "a mission should consist of a set of bullets"

Try within the department to reach "conceptual convergence"

- ➔ "who do you want to serve"
- ➔ "in what ways"
- ➔ "with what result"

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I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan  
To Assess Student Learning in the Major

Step 1: Identify someone within the department to lead the process

Step 2: Decide on the scope of the assessment plan

Step 3: Agree on a department mission statement

Step 4: Identify goals and student learning objectives

Useful Resources: Departmental Guidelines for Student Learning  
Assessment Plans: Building a Culture of Evidence  
San Diego State University

<http://dus.sdsu.edu/assessment/DepartmentalGuidelines.pdf>

Academic Learning Compacts  
University of North Florida  
<http://www.unf.edu/acadaffairs/alc/>

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I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan  
To Assess Student Learning in the Major

Academic Learning Compacts  
State of Florida

For all baccalaureate programs, universities will develop Academic Learning Compacts that:

- Identify, at a minimum, the expected core student learning outcomes for program graduates in the areas of
  - content/discipline knowledge and skills;
  - communication skills;
  - critical thinking skills; and
- identify corresponding assessments used to determine how well student learning matches those articulated expectations

SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1

The institution

- identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services;
- assesses whether it achieves these outcomes, and
- provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results

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I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan  
To Assess Student Learning in the Major

Academic Learning Compacts: Some UNF Examples

History,  
Health Administration,  
Music Education,  
Psychology

Academic Learning Compact Websites

Florida A&M: <http://www.famu.edu/assessment/assess.php?content=compacts>  
 Florida Atlantic University: <http://iea.fau.edu/pusateri/assess/ALC.htm>  
 Florida Gulf Coast University: <http://www.fgcu.edu/OCI/alc.htm>  
 Florida International University: <http://www.fiu.edu/~opie/academiclearningcompacts.htm>  
 Florida State University: <http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/smalcs/learningCompacts.cfm>  
 New College of Florida: [http://www.ncf.edu/Provost/fpdb/ALC\\_questionnaire.asp](http://www.ncf.edu/Provost/fpdb/ALC_questionnaire.asp)  
 University of Central Florida: [http://oeas.ucf.edu/alc/academic\\_learning\\_compacts.htm](http://oeas.ucf.edu/alc/academic_learning_compacts.htm)  
 University of Florida: <http://www.aaf.ufl.edu/aaf/alc/>  
 University of North Florida: <http://www.unf.edu/acadaffairs/alc/index.htm>  
 University of South Florida: <http://www.ie.usf.edu/ALC/>  
 University of West Florida: <http://uwf.edu/cutla/CUTLA/alc.htm>

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I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan  
To Assess Student Learning in the Major

- Step 1: Identify someone within the department to lead the process
- Step 2: Decide on the scope of the assessment plan
- Step 3: Agree on a department mission statement
- Step 4: Identify goals and student learning objectives
- Step 5: Identify curriculum activities and experiences related to each objective

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I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan  
To Assess Student Learning in the Major

CURRICULUM MAPPING

	Course #1	Course #2	Course #3	Course #4	Course #5	Course #6	Course #7
Learning Objective a		✓	✓				
Learning Objective b	✓						
Learning Objective c	✓			✓			✓
Learning Objective d					✓	✓	
Learning Objective e			✓	✓			✓

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I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan  
To Assess Student Learning in the Major  
**CURRICULUM MAPPING**

	Course #1	Course #2	Course #3	Course #4	Course #5	Course #6	Course #7
Learning Objective a		I	U				
Learning Objective b	I						
Learning Objective c	I			E			E
Learning Objective d					I	U	
Learning Objective e			I	U			E

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I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan  
To Assess Student Learning in the Major

**Curriculum Activities & Experiences**

General Education Outcome	Assignment or Activity Designed to Address this Outcome	Evidence of Student Achievement
• analyze arguments according to standard criteria	?	?
• assume and defend a position on a given topic	?	?
• use systematic processes, including the collection and analysis of evidence, to form and support conclusions	?	?

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I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan  
To Assess Student Learning in the Major

**Step 5: Identify curriculum activities and experiences related to each objective**

**Step 6: Identify appropriate assessment methods and measures**

**Useful Resources: Assessment Instruments and Methods Available to Assess Student Learning in the Major**  
**University of Wisconsin – Madison**  
<http://www.provost.wisc.edu/assessment/manual/manual2.html>

**Evaluating Assessment Strategies**  
**American Psychological Association**  
[http://apa.org/ed/eval\\_strategies.html](http://apa.org/ed/eval_strategies.html)

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**I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan  
To Assess Student Learning in the Major**

**Step 6: Identify appropriate assessment methods and measures**

**Step 7: Develop an action plan to collect data**

**Useful Resources:** Department Level Assessment: Promoting  
Continuous Improvement  
Idea Center – Kansas State University  
<http://www.idea.k-state.edu/resources/index.html>

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**I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan  
To Assess Student Learning in the Major**

**Considerations in collecting the data**

Susan Hatfield, Winona State University

**Why is this important?**

**From whom can we get this information?**

**How can it be collected?**

**Can the data collection serve more than one purpose?**

**When is the best time to collect the data?**

**How can the data be evaluated?**

**How can the data be used?**

**How can the data be reported?**

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**I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan  
To Assess Student Learning in the Major**

**Step 6: Identify appropriate assessment methods and measures**

**Step 7: Develop an action plan to collect data**

**Step 8: Analyze, summarize, interpret and share the results**

- How you analyze and summarize depends on the audience
- Cross-check interpretations with different constituent groups
- Spend as much time sharing as you do collecting

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**I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan To Assess Student Learning in the Major**

**Step 6: Identify appropriate assessment methods and measures**

**Step 7: Develop an action plan to collect data**

**Step 8: Analyze, summarize, interpret and share the results**

**Step 9: Use findings to prompt improvement initiatives**

**SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1**

The institution

- identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services;
- assesses whether it achieves these outcomes, and
- provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results

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**I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan To Assess Student Learning in the Major**

**Step 6: Identify appropriate assessment methods and measures**

**Step 7: Develop an action plan to collect data**

**Step 8: Analyze, summarize, interpret and share the results**

**Step 9: Use findings to prompt improvement initiatives**

**Step 10: Develop and implement a plan to monitor the impact of improvements**

**Useful Resource:**

**Program Assessment Handbook**  
University of Central Florida  
[http://oeas.ucf.edu/doc/acad\\_assess\\_handbook.pdf](http://oeas.ucf.edu/doc/acad_assess_handbook.pdf)

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**I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan To Assess Student Learning in the Major**

**Some Potential Improvement Areas:**  
UCF Academic Program Assessment Handbook

**Changes to Assessment Plan**

- revision of intended learning outcome statements(s)
- revision of measurement approaches
- collection of and analysis of additional data and information
- changes of data collection methods

**Changes to Curriculum**

- changes in pedagogical practices
- revision or enforcement of prerequisites
- revision of course sequence
- revision of course content
- addition of course(s)
- deletion of course(s)

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**I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan To Assess Student Learning in the Major**

**Some Potential Improvement Areas:  
UCF Academic Program Assessment Handbook**

**Changes to Academic Processes**

- modification of frequency or schedule of course offerings
- improvements of technology
- changes in personnel
- implement additional training
- revision of advising standards or processes
- revision of admission criteria

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**Presentation Outline**

**I. Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan To Assess Student Learning in the Major**

- Identify some best practices
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- Highlight some favorite assessment practices

**II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Majors Should Know & Be Able To Do (Content Knowledge)**

- Approach that includes all departmental faculty

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**II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Majors Should Know & Be Able To Do (Content Knowledge)**

**Major = Psychology**



**How might you go about deciding what students need to know?**

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II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Majors Should Know & Be Able To Do (Content Knowledge)

**How might you go about deciding what students need to know?**

**Idea #1** Let's take every required course in the major and ask the faculty who teach each of those courses to identify the top 10 concepts or principles they think every student should know.

**Result:** 8 required courses x 10 concepts = 80 concepts

**Downside?**

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II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Majors Should Know & Be Able To Do (Content Knowledge)

**How might you go about deciding what students need to know?**

**Idea #2** Let's take the introductory course in the major (which is a pre-requisite for all other required courses) and ask every faculty member what 10 concepts or principles they want students to know from the introductory course to be properly prepared for their more advanced course?

**Result:** 14 faculty members x 10 concepts = 140 concepts

**Downside?**

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II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Majors Should Know & Be Able To Do (Content Knowledge)

**How might you go about deciding what students need to know?**

**Idea #3** Let's assemble the faculty within our department and empirically derive what we as a group think are the most important terms, concepts, principles, facts, etc that every graduate from our department ought to know.

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II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Majors Should Know & Be Able To Do (Content Knowledge)

**6 Step Process for Deciding What Majors Ought to Know**

- Step #1:** Assemble the department (program) faculty.
- Step #2:** Distribute copies of different introductory psychology textbooks
- Step #3:** Examine *Table of Contents*...Identify ten sub-fields of the psychology discipline by examining the chapter titles....Use Flip Chart .....Reach consensus

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II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Students Should Know & Be Able To Do



**Psychology:**  
A Concise Introduction  
by Richard Griggs

- Preface
- Chapter 1 The Science of Psychology
- Chapter 2 Neuroscience
- Chapter 3 Sensation and Perception
- Chapter 4 Learning
- Chapter 5 Memory
- Chapter 6 Thinking and Intelligence
- Chapter 7 Developmental Psychology
- Chapter 8 Personality Theories & Assessment
- Chapter 9 Social Psychology
- Chapter 10 Abnormal Psychology
- Glossary
- References
- Index



**Psychology** by  
Alison Clarke-Stewart et al

- Preface
- Chapter 1 Introduction to Psychology
- Chapter 2 Research in Psychology
- Chapter 3 Biological Aspects of Psychology
- Chapter 4 Sensation
- Chapter 5 Perception
- Chapter 6 Learning
- Chapter 7 Memory
- Chapter 8 Cognition and Language
- Chapter 9 Consciousness
- Chapter 10 Cognitive Abilities
- Chapter 11 Motivation and Emotion
- Chapter 12 Human Development
- Chapter 13 Health, Stress, and Coping
- Chapter 14 Personality
- Chapter 15 Psychological Disorders
- Chapter 16 Treatment of Psychological Disorders
- Chapter 17 Social cognition
- Chapter 18 Social Influences
- Appendix: Statistics in Psychological Research
- References

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**Subfields of Psychology**

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### Ten Subfields of Psychology

- 1. History & Systems      History of psychology, older systems and theories, behavior theory & phenomena, philosophy of science
- 2. Developmental        Lifespan development, Personality theory, tests, intelligence, psychoanalytic theory
- 3. Biological              Neuro-anatomy and physiology (except sensory processes), biochemical approaches, drug action, organic disorders
- 4. Methodology & Statistics      Statistics, research methodology, measurement theory, test theory, survey theory and methodology
- 5. Behavior                Animal learning and behavior, conditioning & learning phenomena., learning theory (excludes verbal learning)
- 6. Cognitive                General cognitive, verbal learning, psycholinguistics, decision processes
- 7. Perception              Perceptual processes, sensation, sensory mechanisms, sensory anatomy & physiology, psychophysics
- 8. Personality              Personality theory, personality tests, intelligence, psychoanalytic theory
- 9. Abnormal                Functional disorders, organic disorders, therapies, psychoanalytic theory
- 10. Social                  Human emotion and motivation, small-group dynamics, interpretation of others, cultural influences, organizations

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### II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Majors Should Know & Be Able To Do (Content Knowledge)

#### 6 Step Process for Deciding What Majors Ought to Know

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- Step #4: For each subfield, prepare a list of 25, 50, or 100 terms, concepts, or principles addressed within respective chapters

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### Subfield = Biological Terms, Concepts, Principles

- |                  |                           |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| dendrite         | synapse                   |
| axon             | acetylcholine             |
| cell body        | dopamine                  |
| myelin sheath    | Central nervous system    |
| neurotransmitter | Peripheral nervous system |

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II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Majors Should Know & Be Able To Do (Content Knowledge)

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- Step #4: For each subfield, prepare a list of 25, 50, or 100 terms, concepts, or principles addressed within respective chapters
- Step #5: Create a rating form for each subfield and ask faculty within the department to rate the importance of each term, concept or principle

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II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Majors Should Know & Be Able To Do (Content Knowledge)

***Psychology Literacy: A First Approximation***  
C. Alan Boneau  
George Mason University  
American Psychologist, July 1990

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II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Majors Should Know & Be Able To Do (Content Knowledge)

**Criteria For Rating Terms**

- Very Important (5) All psychology baccalaureates should be able to make knowledgeable statements about this term
- Important (4) All psychology baccalaureates should, at a minimum, recognize this term
- Somewhat specialized (3) But all psychology doctorates should be able to make knowledgeable statements about this term (and, of course, all above)
- Specialized (2) But all psychology doctorates should, at a minimum, recognize this term
- Overly specialized (1) This is too specialized for general knowledge even at the doctoral level

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II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Majors Should Know & Be Able To Do (Content Knowledge)

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- Specialized (2)** But all psychology doctorates should, at a minimum, recognize this term
- Overly specialized (1)** This is too specialized for general knowledge even at the doctoral level

From Alan Boneau's *Psychology Literacy*

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II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Majors Should Know & Be Able To Do (Content Knowledge)

Subfield: Biological "First 100 Concepts/Terms"	
Concept	Rating
Action potential	
Acytelcholine	
Addiction	
Adopted-child studies	
Alcohol addiction	
All-or-none law	
Alpha waves	
Androgens	
Antagonist	
Anterograde amnesia	
Antianxiaty drugs	
Antidepressant drugs	
Antipsychotic drugs	
Aphasia and apraxia	
Autonomic nervous system	
Behavior genetics	
Bipolar disorder	

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II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Majors Should Know & Be Able To Do (Content Knowledge)

**6 Step Process for Deciding What Majors Ought to Know**

- Step #1:** Assemble the department (program) faculty.
- Step #2:** Distribute copies of different introductory psychology textbooks
- Step #3:** Examine *Table of Contents*...Identify ten sub-fields of the psychology discipline by examining the chapter titles....Use Flip Chart .....Reach consensus
- Step #4:** For each subfield, prepare a list of 25, 50, or 100 terms, concepts, or principles addressed within respective chapters
- Step #5:** Create a rating form for each subfield and ask faculty within the department to rate the importance of each term, concept or principle
- Step #6:** Identify the top 100 most important terms, concepts and principles across all subfields




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II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Students Should Know & Be Able To Do

**Top 100 Empirically Derived, Most Important Terms, Concepts and Principles in Psychology at \_\_\_\_\_ University**

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II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Students Should Know & Be Able To Do

**Psychology's Top 100 Terms and Concepts by Subfields**

Concept	Rating	Subfield
Anxiety	5.00	ABNL
Etiology	5.00	ABNL
Psychotherapy	5.00	ABNL
Anxiety Disorder	4.91	ABNL
Mental Illness	4.91	ABNL
Psychosis	4.91	ABNL
Psychosomatic Disorders	4.91	ABNL
Depression	4.82	ABNL
Phobia	4.82	ABNL
Placebo Effect	4.82	ABNL
Classical Conditioning	5.00	BEHV
Operant Conditioning	5.00	BEHV
Reinforcement	5.00	BEHV
Positive Reinforcement	4.93	BEHV
Extinction	4.89	BEHV
Instrumental Behavior	4.89	BEHV
Law of Effect	4.84	BEHV
Avoidance Learning	4.79	BEHV
Origin of Species	4.79	BEHV
Conditioned Stimulus	4.74	BEHV
Central Nervous System	4.93	BIOL
Neurotransmitter	4.88	BIOL

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II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Students Should Know & Be Able To Do

**Psychology's Top 100 Terms and Concepts by Ratings**

Concept	Rating	Subfield
Anxiety	5.00	ABNL
Attachment	5.00	DEVT
Classical Conditioning	5.00	BEHV
Control Group	5.00	METH
Correlation Coefficient	5.00	METH
Dependent Variable	5.00	METH
Ego	5.00	PERS
Etiology	5.00	ABNL
Experimental Group	5.00	METH
Gestalt Principles of Organization	5.00	PERC
Hypothesis Testing	5.00	METH
Independent Variable	5.00	METH
Normal Distribution	5.00	METH
Operant Conditioning	5.00	BEHV
Personality	5.00	PERS
Psychotherapy	5.00	ABNL
Reinforcement	5.00	BEHV
Sample	5.00	METH
Significance Level	5.00	METH
Significant Difference	5.00	METH
Conditioned Reflex	4.94	HIST
Central Nervous System	4.93	BIOL

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**II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Majors Should Know & Be Able To Do (Content Knowledge)**

**Content Knowledge Base.....Then What**

Recognize and affirm that what we want our students to know and be able to do goes way beyond the mere mastery of core concepts and principles.....these core concepts are the building blocks for higher order cognitive activities

We might want to see in what courses these important concepts and principles are taught (introduced, used, emphasized)

We might want to design some Pre – Post Test assessment measures to document mastery of these important concepts and principles

Other domains of learning need to be included in your learning objectives (attitudes & values, skills and abilities, etc.)

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**II. Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Majors Should Know & Be Able To Do (Content Knowledge)**

- Approach that includes all departmental faculty

**III. Evaluating the Quality & Completeness of Departmental Assessment Plans**

- Share couple of samples of evaluation forms

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**III. Evaluating the Quality & Completeness of Departmental Assessment Plans**


  
 THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA SYSTEMS OFFICE OF ASSESSMENT

Department Program Student Learning Assessment Plan Review  
 (Approved January 25, 2006)

Department/Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

N = Submitted D = Drafting M = Missing  
 Y = Yes N = No

Assessment Plan Component	Y	N	M	Comments
Overall Purpose				
Clear, concise and complete statement of the aim and purpose of the department/program				
Provides a comprehensive framework for student learning goals				
Student Learning Goals				
Clearly measurable, valid and relevant				
Consistent with department/program mission and vision				
Assessment Methods				
Use of multiple methods consistent with the goals and purposes of the assessment				
Use of multiple data sources to collect evidence of student learning				
Methods are consistent with the department/program mission and vision				
Assessment Questions				
Clear and complete description of how to construct and administer the assessment				
Clear and complete description of which students will be assessed and when				
Efficient means to measure progress and assess learning goals				

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Department of _____	2005-06 Annual Report Assessment Feedback Rubric		Comments /Recommendations/Suggestions from Bob Smallwood
Academic Learning Compact	Exemplary	Acceptable	Developing
Mission Statement	<p>The mission statement has clearly expressed the purpose of the program, who the program exists to serve, in what ways and for whom.</p> <p>The statements are aligned and consistent with the college and division/mission statements. That is, in particular, some reference is made to excellence, focus, relevance and accountability. The content and emphasis of the mission statement is also aligned with the respective professional, organizational and program-specific, accrediting bodies, if applicable.</p>	<p>The mission statement includes clear expression of the purpose of the program that identifies what the program does, what it does and for whom it does it.</p> <p>The statements are aligned and consistent with the college and division/mission statements.</p>	<p>The mission statement includes a general statement of the intent of the program but does not clearly express what it does and for whom it does it.</p> <p>and/or fails to demonstrate clear alignment with the college or division/mission statements.</p> <p>Recommendations: Suggestions:</p>
<p>Comments: For some useful insights into the construction of a mission statement, see AP Pg. 17-18 in the University of Central Florida's Program Assessment Handbook, that can be found at the following site: <a href="http://www.education.ucf.edu/assessment_handbook.pdf">http://www.education.ucf.edu/assessment_handbook.pdf</a> in Chapter 3 in "Independent State College's Assessment Guidebook that can be found at: <a href="http://www.independestate.com/submit/">http://www.independestate.com/submit/</a>.</p>			
<p>THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA PLANNING OFFICE</p>			
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## Presentation Outline

- I. **Steps in Developing a Department Assessment Plan To Assess Student Learning in the Major**
  - Identify some best practices
  - Reference some useful resources
  - Highlight some favorite assessment practices
- II. **Strategy for Empirically Deriving What Majors Should Know & Be Able To Do (Content Knowledge)**
  - Approach that includes all departmental faculty
- III. **Evaluating the Quality & Completeness of Departmental Assessment Plans**
  - Share couple of samples of evaluation forms

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA  
PLANNING OFFICE

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## Questions or Comments



THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA  
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# Thanks for your attention & participation

Please complete the session evaluation form.

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