Assessment Manual

York County Community College

Contents

Part I. Introduction

MISSION   VALUES   VISION   GOALS

York County Community College is committed to a process of continuous quality improvement that incorporates institutional assessment, budget management, and strategic planning.

This manual is designed for use by YCCC faculty and staff. Its purpose is:

- to make our goals for assessment clear,
- to help faculty and staff understand the process for assessment at the College,
- to provide resources to faculty and staff as they put together their own assessment projects.

Assessment at YCCC is the **ongoing & systematic evaluation** of all campus operations, support services, and instructional programs as a means of determining institutional effectiveness and the **fulfillment of the College's mission and purposes**.

YCCC's Mission

York County Community College provides academic, career, and transfer programs while serving to advance cultural, economic, and workforce development in York County and the State of Maine.

YCCC's Vision

At York County Community College, we celebrate each student's individual success. While we recognize academic progress as an important part of their journey, we appreciate the value of life experience, personal development, self-awareness and the pursuit of learning.

Connections and individual attention are at the heart of our relationships with students. Whether they spend a semester or several years at our college, students will leave knowing they have been part of a community that has invested in them as a whole person. We are committed to empowering each student to achieve their full academic potential and accomplish their personal goals.

YCCC also shares the strategic goals adopted by the Maine Community College System:

1. Get them in: access and attraction

2. Get them through: student success

3. Keep them connected: workforce development and lifelong learning

Part II. The Purpose of Assessment

The purpose of assessment is to demonstrate **continuous improvement** in student learning, educational programs and administrative & educational support services. The assessment process is about *getting better*, documenting that process, and using the results to make improvements, as needed.

(Advice from Barbara Walvoord,: "…make sure you are using the information you collect. It is better to have a small amount of data you actually use than to proliferate data you cannot use effectively. Keep it simple").

Basically, assessment is formalizing what people have already been doing by making sure clear outcomes are in place, creating assessment tools to measure how well one meets them, collecting that information, and analyzing it to make improvements to the system.

Part III. What Assessment Is Not and What It Can Be

Assessment is:
- **not** about employee/faculty evaluation.
- **not** a way to hold faculty responsible for students' own shortcomings or for larger social, economic, or cultural issues that impact learning.
- **not** just giving grades.
- **not** punitive.

Assessment can be:
- **An opportunity** to be curious, to explore a thought, test a theory, or pilot a process, and to learn interesting things.
- **A way** to tell the story of your program/department's success.
- **A tool** to help you justify requests for more resources.
- **Student-centered**

Student learning outcomes will be the primary focus for academic programs assessment efforts.

For support programs, support services outcomes will be the primary focus of assessment efforts (p. 6).

- **Program-focused**

    The college's assessment process will not be used to evaluate the performance of individual students, faculty, or staff (p.6).

- **Grass roots/Faculty- and staff-managed**

    Ideally, all faculty and staff members within a program would participate in discussions regarding all components of program assessment (p. 7).

- **College-directed**

    Administration in the direct organizational line should provide feedback to programs about their plans, help communicate deadlines for reporting results, and assist in providing necessary resources to sustain the assessment process (p. 7).

- **With centralized training, support, and reporting**

    The Director of Assessment and the Assessment Committee provides support, consultation, and resources regarding planning and implementing of assessment activities.

Source: http://www.cccti.edu/Inst_Effect/Documents/AssessmentCCCTI.pdf

Part IV. Assessment Roles and Responsibilities @ YCCC

All constituencies at YCCC have a role in assessment and learning.

I.   **President and the Senior Leadership Team**

Responsibilities may include:

- Demonstrate institutional commitment to ongoing & systematic evaluation of all campus operations, support services, and instructional programs as a means of determining institutional effectiveness and the use of its results at all levels across the college to fulfill the College's mission and purposes.
- Facilitate professional development activities that support assessment to improve student learning and institutional effectiveness.
- Coordinate response to accreditation standards and recommendations as they relate to assessment of student learning outcomes and institutional goals.
- Identify and manage budgets to support assessment.
- Ensure that the results of assessment inform resource allocation decisions through the Planning, Budgeting, and Assessment process.

II.   College Council

Responsibilities may include:
- Serve as a forum for the dissemination of assessment results.
- Oversee and participate in the assessment of college governance.

III.   YCCC Assessment Committee

The purpose of the Assessment Committee is to support and participate in a culture of continuous improvement through campus-wide assessment.

- Regularly assess individual institutional learning outcomes.
- Regularly review the institutional learning outcomes.
- Review and approve program, divisional, and departmental learning outcomes and/or goals, to include alignment with the institutional learning outcomes.
- Provide resources for assessment activities (for example, assessment manual, professional development).

IV.   YCCC Director of Assessment

Responsibilities include:

- Provide support and training to faculty and staff in their assessment efforts
- Track assessment projects and disseminate results.
- Convene and serve on assessment conferences
- Maintain the Institutional Assessment Plan
- Prepare the Institutional Assessment Scorecard

V.   YCCC Institutional Research
- Create and provide access to tangible data and reports

VI.   Department Heads Chairs, Deans, Directors

Responsibilities may include:
- Support assessment learning outcomes and goals within the departments, including the allowance of adequate time for professional development.
- Facilitate the appropriate participation of faculty and staff in program assessment   activities (i.e., gathering and analyzing data).
- Demonstrate commitment to assessment and encourage use of its results.
- Ensure an assessment timeline exists for departmental courses, programs, and services.
- Facilitate coordination of assessment driven program planning and resource requests.

VII.   Full-time Faculty

Faculty members' collective responsibilities may include:
- Design assessment plans for the college's courses and programs.
- Design assessment measures according to the assessment plans.
- Implement instructional strategies that promote student learning outcomes and conduct assessments that ascertain levels of student learning.
- Gather and archive assessment data according to the appropriate course and program assessment plan.
- Collaborate with colleagues to analyze, adjust, and improve all aspects of program design, delivery, and services based on assessment results.
- Provide representation on the Assessment Committee.

VIII.   Adjunct Faculty

Responsibilities may include:
- Design assessment measures according to the assessment plans.
- Implement instructional strategies that promote student learning outcomes and conduct assessments that ascertain levels of student learning.
- Gather and archive assessment data according to the appropriate course and program assessment plan.
- Collaborate with colleagues to analyze, adjust, and improve all aspects of program design, delivery, and services based on assessment results.
- Provide representation on the Assessment Committee.

IX.   Staff

Staff members' collective responsibilities may include:
- Design assessment plans for the college's departments and programs.
- Design assessment measures according to the assessment plans.
- Implement strategies that promote student learning outcomes/departmental goals and conduct assessments that ascertain levels of student learning or achievement of goals.
- Gather and archive assessment data according to the appropriate departmental or program assessment plan.
- Collaborate with colleagues to analyze, adjust, and improve all aspects of department/program design, delivery, and services based on assessment results.
- Provide representation on the Assessment Committee.

Students participate in direct assessment activities (tests, papers, projects, portfolios, etc.) and indirect assessment activities (surveys, focus groups, etc.). Other roles in assessment may include:

- Facilitate assessment activities by acting as assessors themselves (critiquing class projects and presentations of other students, group work evaluation, conducting campus surveys, etc.).
- Provide feedback and comments on assessment activities.
- Participate in departmental analyses of assessment data and deliberations about program improvements (e.g., exit interviews).
- Provide representation on the Assessment Committee.

Part V. Principles of Good Practice for Assessment in Higher Education

In 1995, the American Association for Higher Education published "9 Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning." Although these are over twenty-years old, they still are applicable and provide a good overview of the best practices for assessment:

1. **The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.** Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve. Educational values should drive not only what we choose to assess but also how we do so. Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what's easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about.

2. **Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.** Learning is a complex process. It entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but values, attitudes, and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom. Assessment should reflect these understandings by employing a diverse array of methods, including those that call for actual performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration. Such an approach aims for a more complete and accurate picture of learning, and therefore firmer bases for improving our students' educational experience.

3. **Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.** Assessment is a goal-oriented process. It entails comparing educational performance with educational purposes and expectations -- those derived from the institution's mission,

from faculty intentions in program and course design, and from knowledge of students' own goals. Where program purposes lack specificity or agreement, assessment as a process pushes a campus toward clarity about where to aim and what standards to apply; assessment also prompts attention to where and how program goals will be taught and learned. Clear, shared, implementable goals are the cornerstone for assessment that is focused and useful.

4. **Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes**. Information about outcomes is of high importance; where students "end up" matters greatly. But to improve outcomes, we need to know about student experience along the way -- about the curricula, teaching, and kind of student effort that lead to particular outcomes. Assessment can help us understand which students learn best under what conditions; with such knowledge comes the capacity to improve the whole of their learning.

5. **Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic.** Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative. Though isolated, "one-shot" assessment can be better than none, improvement is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of activities undertaken over time. This may mean tracking the process of individual students, or of cohorts of students; it may mean collecting the same examples of student performance or using the same instrument semester after semester. The point is to monitor progress toward intended goals in a spirit of continuous improvement. Along the way, the assessment process itself should be evaluated and refined in light of emerging insights.

6. **Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved**. Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility. Thus, while assessment efforts may start small, the aim over time is to involve people from across the educational community. Faculty plays an especially important role, but assessment's questions can't be fully addressed without participation by student-affairs educators, librarians, administrators, and students. Assessment may also involve individuals from beyond the campus (alumni/ae, trustees, employers) whose experience can enrich the sense of appropriate aims and standards for learning. Thus understood, assessment is not a task for small groups of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better-informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.

7. **Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about**. Assessment recognizes the value of information in the process of improvement. But to be useful, information must be connected to issues or questions that people really care about. This implies assessment approaches that produce evidence that relevant parties will find credible, suggestive, and applicable to decisions that need to be made. It means thinking in advance about how the information will be used, and by whom. The point of assessment is not to gather data and return "results"; it is a process that starts with the questions of decision-makers, that involves them in the gathering and interpreting of data, and that informs and helps guide continuous improvement.
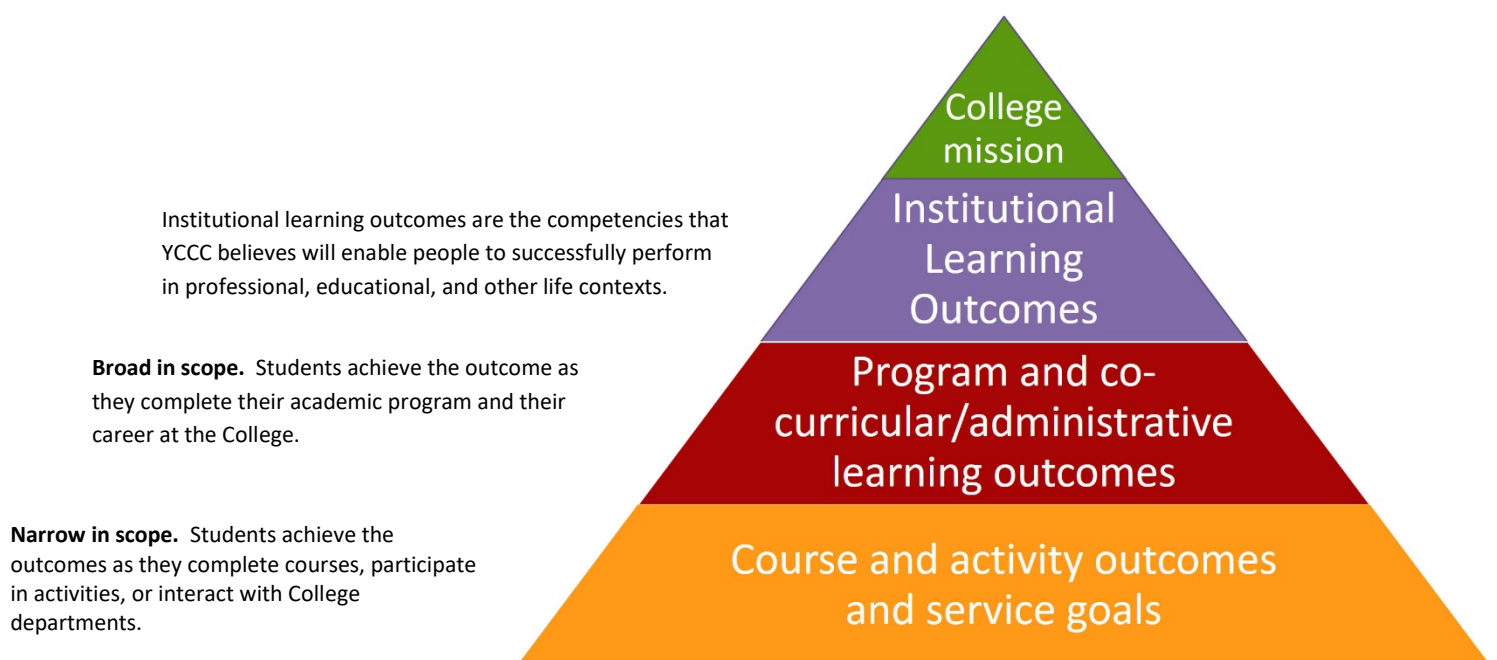
8. **Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change**. Assessment alone changes little. Its greatest contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and worked at. On such campuses, the push to improve educational performance is a visible and primary goal of leadership; improving the quality of undergraduate education is central to the institution's planning, budgeting, and personnel decisions. On such campuses, information about learning outcomes is seen as an integral part of decision making, and avidly sought.

9. **Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.** There is a compelling public stake in education. As educators, we have a responsibility to the publics that support or depend on us to provide information about the ways in which our students meet goals and expectations. But that responsibility goes beyond the reporting of such information; our deeper obligation -- to ourselves, our students, and society -- is to improve. Those to whom educators are accountable have a corresponding obligation to support such attempts at improvement.

Successful assessment requires an environment characterized by effective leadership, administrative commitment, adequate resources, faculty and staff development opportunities, and time.

Following these best practices, collaborating with others, and discussing/learning from the information gained leads to the development of a culture of assessment.

Part VI. Different levels of assessment

Institutional learning outcomes are the competencies that YCCC believes will enable people to successfully perform in professional, educational, and other life contexts.

Broad in scope. Students achieve the outcome as they complete their academic program and their career at the College.

Narrow in scope. Students achieve the outcomes as they complete courses, participate in activities, or interact with College departments.

College mission

Institutional Learning Outcomes

Program and co-curricular/administrative learning outcomes

Course and activity outcomes and service goals

Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

YCCC's Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) were established to provide a framework to reflect the College's shared educational values for an associate degree education. These outcomes are embedded in all degree programs so that YCCC associate degree graduates will have acquired knowledge, skills and understanding in the areas of:

- communication
- quantitative competence
- global awareness
- critical thinking and problem solving
- information literacy
- technological competence
- responsibility and integrity.

These ILO's also describe the competencies that YCCC believes will enable people to successfully perform in professional, educational, and other life contexts. They are our promise to our students.

ILO's are taught and practiced in core courses in every program of study and through participation in co-Curricular activities.

More information about YCCC's institutional learning outcomes is available on the College's Assessment web page.

Program Level Outcomes (PLOs)

Program learning outcomes (PLO's) are statements of the specific skills, knowledge, and/or behaviors that students should demonstrate upon completion of an academic program. Successful program assessment begins with clear and specific learning outcomes that state what students will know or be able to do when they graduate. Strong program learning outcomes are the foundation for effective assessment plans.

All YCCC degree programs have program learning outcomes, available on the College's Assessment webpage.

Course Level Outcomes

Course learning outcomes are the specific skills, knowledge, and/or behaviors that students should demonstrate upon completion of the course. Effective objectives are states in terms of student performance (i.e. what will a student do as a result of the instruction?) rather than teacher performance, learning process, or subject matter topics.

Guidelines for writing effective course learning outcomes are available in the Assessment Toolkit for Faculty and Staff section below and on the College's Assessment webpage.

Course learning outcomes are developed by faculty and approved by the Curriculum Committee.

Co-curricular and administrative departmental learning outcomes and goals are the specific skills, knowledge, and/or behaviors that students should demonstrate after participation in or interaction with co-curricular or administrative departments. Departmental goals are statements about services and programs offered by departments and are often informed by best practices and guidelines from professional organizations.

Guidelines for writing effective learning outcomes and goals are available in the Assessment Toolkit for Faculty and Staff section below and on the College's Assessment webpage.

Departmental learning outcomes and/or goals are developed by staff and approved by the Assessment Committee.

Part VII. The Building Blocks of Assessment at YCCC

According to Barbara Wallvoord (p. 3) assessment has three basic steps:

- Goals
- Data
- Action

At YCCC, we have reinterpreted those steps as "building blocks".

Goals

> *For instructors*, ask yourself what you want students to be able to do when they complete your courses, programs, learning activities. Learning outcomes can be found in your course outline or in your academic program description.

> **Sample learning outcome:** *"Students will be able to....."*

> *For co-curricular/administrative departments*, ask yourself what are you or your department trying to achieve?

> **Sample program/departmental goal:** *"This Program/department will..."*

> Goals are often based upon professional best practices, such as the CAS Standards.

All goals should be:

> **Meaningful:** Are your goals aligned to your program/departmental mission?

Manageable: Are your goals actually achievable and assessable?

Measurable: Can you articulate how you know that you have achieved your goals?

Action Plan

Which specific outcome or goal will you investigate?

What are you going to do to achieve your goal or outcome?

What instructional activity will you investigate?

What resources do you need for your project? *See **Data** and **Tools** below.*

What faculty and/or staff will work with you on the project?

What is your timeline?

When will you have the results of your project?

Will you require an Assessment Conference at the conclusion of your project?

How will you communicate the results of your project?

Data

What data or evidence will you gather to know you have achieved your goal?

Examples:

- Student work
- Usage statistics
- Survey results
- Student feedback

How will you discover how well students are achieving your learning outcomes?

What is your standard of achievement (a clear, measurable statement)?

Tools

What tools do you need to gather your data?

- Jenzabar and Infomaker
- Rubrics
- Springshare Suite
  - Survey & quiz creator
  - Calendars
  - Appointments
  - Ticketing system (online help desk)
  - Online FAQs
  - Online chat
  - Web pages
  - Interactive tutorials
  - Equipment booking

Closing the Loop

The action plan for your assessment project includes "closing the loop": the use of assessment results to improve student learning and/or the community experience. Ask yourself:

- What did I learn from my study?
- How will I use the results of my study to impact my teaching, the curriculum, the program, or my delivery of services, in order to improve the achievement of that learning outcome or goal?
- How will I document and share this study to demonstrate to our stakeholders that we are creating a culture of assessment at YCCC?

The building blocks of assessment help YCCC to:

- Gain insight into student learning so that we can speak with authority about the value of a YCCC education.
- Support the efforts of faculty and staff to identify those activities that have the greatest potential for success in fostering student learning.

- Develop a process for encouraging and maintaining a culture of data-based decision making
- Establish an ongoing system to demonstrate institutional effectiveness of the type required by programmatic and regional accrediting bodies.

Part VIII. YCCC's Assessment Cycle
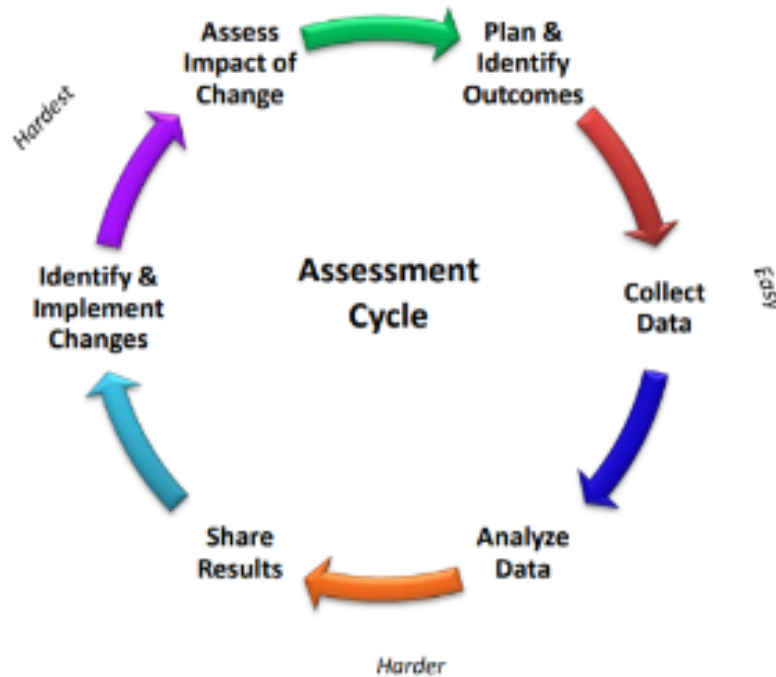
Assessment Planning

Assessment plans from academic programs and departments, co-curricular and administrative departments, and governance bodies will be submitted to the appropriate dean and the Director of Assessment, annually in September. Planning meetings with the Director of Assessment may be scheduled at any time of year.

Assessment plans will be embedded in all program reviews, in all New Initiative Proposals, and in all Grant Proposal forms.

Assessment plans are designed to:

- Link assessment efforts to institutional, divisional, or departmental strategic plans
- Identify outcomes, measures, and standards of achievement for assessment
- Indicate resources needed for assessment (staff time, technology, data gathering tools, etc.)
- Establish a timeline for the assessment project, from implementation and data gathering, to analysis and reporting out.

Who develops the assessment plan?
Typically division, program, or department heads will develop an assessment plan, in consultation, as needed, with the Director of Assessment.

What does an assessment plan look like?
The following forms can be used as a template for assessment planning.

- Assessment Plan, Academic Programs & Departments
- Assessment Plan, Co-curricular & Administrative Departments
- Assessment Plan, College Council, Committees, & Workgroups
- New Initiative Proposal, with embedded assessment plan
- Assessment Conference Report form

Assessment Conferences

What is the purpose of an assessment conference?
An assessment conference is charged with:

- analyzing data and results
- developing a concise, written report that describes and summarizes the essential findings
- proposing specific recommendations based upon its appraisal
- making projections on how the recommendations will impact institutional effectiveness, the strategic plan, budgetary planning, and resource allocation

When do assessment conferences happen?
The Director of Assessment will schedule an assessment conference throughout the year, on receipt of:

- program reviews
- new program development
- new initiative reviews
- completed studies of institutional, program, and course learning outcomes
- completed studies of co-curricular/administrative departmental goals
- data from various measurement tools (CCSSE, Noel Levitz, etc.)

Who participates in assessment conferences?
After consultation with appropriate staff and faculty members, the Director of Assessment will determine the makeup of each conference. Conferences will typically include the following participants:

- Appropriate dean or department chair
- The individual with direct responsibility for the area being assessed
- A faculty member
- A staff person who is not part of the department, program, or office under review

- Associate Dean of Institutional Research and Planning
- Associate Academic Dean/Director of Assessment

Assessment conference process
Using the "Assessment Conference Report Form", the conference committee will identify and prioritize recommendations and/or action steps as follows:

1. Action steps that can be implemented in the short term without great expense or reorganization.
2. Steps that require more funding than is available in the current fiscal year, but should be funded/pursued in the next fiscal year.
3. Steps that are of such significance and expense that they should be included in the strategic planning/budgeting process.
4. Items for which more information, data, or study is needed.
5. Deficiencies or areas of concern found to be not worth addressing at this time.

When appropriate, the report will reference any potential impact to the strategic plan and will make recommendations to guide the annual budget allocations and/or capital needs. The completed form will be submitted to the President's Cabinet and, when applicable, to the College Council.

The Director of Assessment will ensure that the conferences are convened and the reports completed and distributed in a timely manner. It will be the responsibility of the division Deans to ensure that the conference reports are reviewed and considered during budget and strategic planning discussions and to request scheduled progress updates on any recommended action steps.

The assessment conference report will include a brief description or executive summary of the program review, new initiative, new program, study, or survey being analyzed. While the major focus of the report should be on those areas where YCCC appears to be deficient or underperforming, attention should also be called to those findings which highlight areas of strength or where the College is performing above the norms. One conference recommendation might be that the College further capitalize on a strength or expand an already robust program or activity. It should then identify those major areas of concern that the conference believes the College should address.

Given budgetary and organizational limitations, each conference is strongly encouraged to identify those solutions or action steps that can be pursued in the short-term with little or no additional spending. Initiatives that will require significant expenditures would be included as part of item number three above.

Assessment Conferences will also identify a date for follow-up on conference recommendations.

Institutional Assessment Scorecard

In July, the Director of Assessment will prepare the Institutional Assessment Scorecard, for presentation at the August PBA Forum.

Part IX. Audiences Who May Be Interested in Assessment Results

From **Analyzing Audiences for Assessment** (Walvoord, 2010. p. 105)

Who?	Needs to Know What?	For What?
Departments, Institution	How well are our strategies for student learning working? What can we do to improve?	Make improvements
Institutional Leaders	What assessment strategies do we have in place? What do we need for successful assessment in the future?	Recommended changes for improvement of assessment; Report to regional accreditor or other external audience
Accreditors	Does the institution meet our standards for an assessment system? What advice could we offer to help the institution to improve its system?	Accreditation review
Prospective Students	How good is the institution in helping me reach my learning, professional, and personal education goals?	Enrollment
Donors	How well is this institution doing? Is it able to exercise appropriate accountability for my money?	Giving
Trustees, Legislature	What assessment strategies are in place? What do we need to do to strengthen assessment? How well are the institution's students doing? Does the institution meet accreditation standards?	

Part X. Assessment Toolkit for Faculty and Staff

Developing Outcomes
- [YCCC Program Review Process](#)
- [Writing Program Learning Outcomes](#)
- [Program Learning Outcomes Worksheet](#)
- [Program Learning Outcomes Approval Form](#)
- Linking Program Learning Outcomes & Departmental Goals to the Institutional Learning Outcomes
- [Writing SMART Goals](#)

Data Visualization Tips
- [Best Practices for Charting Data](#)
- [Data Visualization: Best Practices for Turning Numbers Into Shareable Images](#)
- [Information Should Cultivate Action](#)

Part XI. Assessment FAQs

Q: What is assessment?

A: Assessment is the systematic collection of information about student learning, using the time, knowledge, expertise, and resources available in order to inform decisions that affect learning (Walvoord, p.2)

Q: What is program assessment?
A: Assessment at the program level systematically collects information about student learning across courses and experiences in an academic or co-curricular program. Its purpose is to determine how well students as a whole are meeting expected learning goals, and inform decisions about how to innovated, improve, and maintain excellence in program content, delivery and pedagogy. Assessment is in many ways action research, and is intended to inform individual and local action, instead of leading to generalizable results.

Q: Who develops the assessment plan?
A: Typically, division, program, or department heads will develop an assessment plan, in consultation, as needed, with the Director of Assessment.

Q. When and where do assessment plans happen?
A. Assessment plans from academic programs and departments, co-curricular and administrative departments, and governance bodies will be submitted annually.

Q: Why do we need to do assessment?

A: To find out what students are learning; to talk about what is important to learn; to improve; to demonstrate accountability.

Q: How does student learning assessment benefit students?

A: Assessment enables students to develop skills and abilities for the purpose of engaging in a changing global landscape. Assessment facilitates consistency and coherency between courses and across disciplines. It ensures regular review of learning outcomes and integration within the curriculum, providing clear and consistent communication about the knowledge, skills, and abilities important to particular courses and across programs or discipline studies. There is a body of literature that connects student learning assessment to persistence and completion or attainment of educational goals. Through the continuous evaluation and improvement process (assessment), we help to identify and remove barriers to ensure students make progress toward their goals.

Q: What is the purpose of assessment?

A: Assessment plans are designed to:

- Link assessment efforts to institutional, divisional, or departmental strategic plans
- Identify outcomes, measures, and standards of achievement for assessment
- Indicate resources needed for assessment (staff time, technology, data gathering tools, etc.)
- Establish a timeline for the assessment project, from implementation and data gathering, to analysis and reporting out.

Q: Who needs to be involved in assessment?

A: All academic programs and certificates, as well as co-curricular programs are expected to engage in student learning and to use assessment results to make program changes that result in enhanced student learning.

Q: Am I already doing assessment in my classes or am I going to have to start from scratch?

A: You may be surprised at how much you are already doing in terms of assessment. For example: Do you include an assignment that asks students to analyze a real life or hypothetical situation applying course concepts in the analysis? This supports the assessment of critical thinking, one of YCCC's Institutional Learning Outcomes.

Q: When is assessment finished?

A: Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at continuous improvement.

Q: What is the difference between grading and assessment?

A: Grading is assigning value to a particular piece of student work or overall student performance in a course. This value is limited to the scope of the specific assignment or course; therefore, assigning a grade doesn't typically tell us how the student will perform in other

courses and/or their larger academic career. Additionally, it rarely sheds light on how well an assignment or course functions within a program or institution. Also, grading is usually a one-time event involving only the student and the instructor, and it is often limited to one-way communication from instructor to student.

Assessment often involves an examination and evaluation of the performance of more than one student, in more than one section, to determine, aggregately, how students are meeting the outcomes for a particular course, across courses, or within a program. The goal is not to evaluate an individual student's performance, rather, the goal is to determine how effectively students are meeting course and program outcomes--it's an analysis of the interface of curriculum, pedagogy, and learning.

Q: Will assessment results be used to evaluate faculty and staff?
A: No. Assessment of student learning is not an evaluation of faculty or staff performance. In interpreting the results of an assessment measure, faculty or staff might collectively decide to give more attention to certain outcomes, and might recommend changes.

Part XI. YCCC Assessment Glossary

https://my.yccc.edu/ICS/icsfs/assessment_glossary.pdf?target=759ee3d7-cbfc-4571-acc7-f66b4e625661

A~

Accountability - Using the results of assessment to demonstrate the quality of educational programs to stakeholders (Suskie, 2009).

Assessment - Assessment is the systematic collection of information about student learning, using the time, knowledge, expertise and resources available, in order to inform decisions that affect student learning (Walvoord, 2010).

Assessment Committee (YCCC) - The purpose of the Assessment Committee is to support and participate in a culture of continuous improvement through campus-wide assessment (Assessment Committee By-Laws).

Scope of Work

- Regularly assess individual institutional learning outcomes.
- Regularly review the institutional learning outcomes.
- Review and approve program, divisional, and departmental learning outcomes and/or goals, to include alignment with the institutional learning outcomes.
- Provide resources for assessment activities (for example, assessment manual, professional development).

Assessment Conference – Assessment conferences are convened for academic program reviews, new academic program development, new initiatives, or on receipt of data from various measurement tools. An assessment conference may be requested by faculty or staff to analyze the results of completed studies of institutional, program, or co-curricular/administrative departmental goals.

The Assessment Conference will:
- develop a concise, written report that describes and summarizes the essential findings.
- propose specific recommendations based upon its appraisal.
- make projections on how the recommendations will impact institutional effectiveness, the strategic plan, budgetary planning, and resource allocation.

Assessment Plan - Assessment plans are created by academic programs and departments, co-curricular and administrative departments, and governance bodies. Assessment plans are designed to:

- Link assessment efforts to institutional, divisional, or departmental strategic plans
- Identify outcomes, measures, and standards of achievement for assessment
- Indicate resources needed for assessment (staff time, technology, data gathering tools, etc.)
- Establish a timeline for the assessment project, from implementation and data gathering, to analysis and reporting out.

~B~

Benchmark – A standard or reference point used for measuring student performance and/or comparing that performance with internal or external groups (State Fair Community College, 2011).

Benchmarking – The process of identifying and learning from institutions that are recognized for their outstanding practices (Palomba & Banta, 1999).

Bloom's Taxonomy – a framework that describes six levels of knowledge and intellectual skills within the cognitive domain of learning. The six levels are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Stassen, Doherty & Poe, 2001; Suskie, 2008).

~C~

Classroom Assessment Technique (CAT) - Classroom assessment is an approach designed to help teachers find out what students are learning in the classroom and how well they are learning it (Angelo and Cross, 1993).

Closing the Loop – The use of assessment results to improve student learning (Walvoord, 2010).

Culture of Assessment - An environment where the predominant attitudes and behaviors of the institution support the assessment of student learning outcomes and co-curricular/administrative goals for the purpose of continuous improvement (Weiner, 2009).

Direct Measures of Learning - Direct evidence of student learning is tangible, visible, self-explanatory, and compelling evidence of exactly what students have and have not learned (Suskie, 2009).
Examples are written assignments, classroom assignments, presentations, test results, projects, logs, portfolios, and direct observations (Leskes, 2002).

Embedded Assessment - Program, general education, or institutional assessments that are embedded into course work. They provide information about student progress in achieving program or institutional goals (Suskie, 2009).

Focus Group – A group discussion organized around a small number of open-ended questions designed to explore an issue and collect in-depth information (Salt Lake Community College, 2011).

Formative Assessment – The gathering of information about student learning during the progression of a course or program to improve the learning of those students (Leskes, 2002).

Goals – Goals describe what students should know or be able to do by the end of a course or program expressed in general terms (Stassen, Doherty & Poe, 2001). *Related Term: outcome.* Co-curricular and administrative departments are very likely to have goals.

Grading - Grading is the process of marking an assessment instrument for the purpose of assigning a student a grade for the course (Cartwright, Weiner, & Streamer-Veneruso, 2009). *Related term: scoring*

Indirect Measures of Student Learning – Indirect evidence consists of signs that students are *probably* learning. Examples include grades, retention and graduation rates, student ratings of their knowledge at the end of a course or program, and acceptance rates into four-year programs (Suskie, 2009). *Related Term: direct measure of student learning*

Institutional Effectiveness – an institution's capacity to achieve its mission and related goals (Maki, 2002).

Institutional Learning Outcomes – Overarching learning goals for all students, regardless of major (Suskie, 2008). Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) at YCCC are:

- *Communication* – Communicate effectively in a clear, well-organized manner to convey ideas with an intended audience in a variety of academic and professional settings.
- *Quantitative Competence* – Identify, analyze and solve problems that are quantitative in nature.

- *Global Awareness, Diversity and Tolerance* – Respectfully engage with others and analyze issues from a multicultural and global perspective.
- *Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving* – Demonstrate and apply critical and creative thinking and problem solving skills.
- *Information Literacy* – Apply research skills to retrieve and evaluate Information and to use it ethically.
- *Technological Competence* – Demonstrate competence in the use of technology to meet personal, academic and professional needs.

<div align="center">~M~</div>

Measurements – Design of strategies, techniques and instruments for collecting feedback data from students that demonstrate desired behavior (*Glossary of Assessment Terms*, n.d.).

Mission - The goal of assessment of student learning is to improve student learning and thus help the College fulfill its educational mission and vision (State Fair Community College, n.d.). The mission of YCCC is stated as follows: YCCC provides academic, career, and transfer programs while serving to advance cultural, economic, and workforce development in York County and the state of Maine. *Related Term: vision*

<div align="center">~N~</div>

NECHE– The New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) is the primary higher education accrediting body in New England.

Norming – The process by which assessment readers learn to apply rubric criteria consistently to student work products and align their scoring. The process by which assessment readers learn to apply rubric criteria consistently to student work products and align their scoring (Maki, 2004).

<div align="center">~O~</div>

Objectives – Course objectives are more specific than learning outcomes and describe what students are supposed to do in order to achieve the end result of the learning experience. Objectives are more task-oriented and describe the process that students will take to achieve the outcomes (Stassen, Doherty & Poe, 2001; Suskie, 2008).

Outcomes – Statements of the skills, knowledge, attitudes, that students have and take with them at the end of a course or program (Suskie, 2008). *Related Terms: Objectives, Program Learning Outcomes*

Outcomes Assessment – The measurement of student learning at the end of a program of study (Suskie, 2008).

<div align="center">~P~</div>

Program Assessment - Program assessment focuses on assessing student learning and experience to determine whether students have acquired the skills, knowledge, and competencies associated with their program of study (Stassen, Doherty & Poe, 2001).

Program Learning Outcomes – The specific skills, values, and attitudes students should demonstrate at the end of a program of study (Stassen, Doherty &Poe, 2001). *Related Terms: Objectives, Outcomes*

~Q~

Qualitative Assessment – Qualitative assessment deals with methods that rely on descriptions rather than numbers For example in-depth, open-ended interviews, and observations of activities (Palomba & Banta, 1999).

Quantitative Assessment – Quantitative assessment deals with methods relying on numerical scores or rating with an emphasis on numbers and measurement (Palomba & Banta, 1999).

~R~

Reliability - Reliability is the measure of consistency for an assessment instrument. The instrument should yield similar results over time with similar populations in similar circumstances ("Glossary of Assessment Terms," n.d.).

Rubric - A rubric is an established set of criteria for scoring or rating students' performance on tests, portfolios, writing samples, or other performance tasks ("Assessment Glossary," 2014).

~S~

Sampling - A way to obtain information about a large group by examining a smaller, randomly chosen selection (the sample) of group members (State Univ. of New York, n.d.)

Scoring - Scoring refers to the process of marking an assessment instrument to get data about how well the course has done at achieving its outcomes (Cartwright, Weiner, & Streamer-Veneruso, 2009). *Related term: grading*

Springshare (Libguides, LibWizard, LibCal, Online Help Desks, etc.): Springshare is an online platform that we use as an assessment tool. Features include:

- Online Help Desks
- Forms/Surveys/Quizzes tool
- Calendar tool
- Event registration
- Online tutorial creator
- Webpages
- Statistics modules with reports and charts for all of the above

Stakeholders (Community College) - An individual or a group of people who have an interest in the outcome of a process or a project (State Fair Community College, n.d.).
YCCC's stakeholders inside the institution include:
- Students
- Administrators
- Faculty
- Staff

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- MCCS Board of Trustees

Stakeholders outside the institution include:
- NECHE (New England Commission of Higher Education
- Other accreditors
- Parents
- Community
- Businesses

Summative Assessment - Summative assessment is a sum-total or final-product assessment of achievement at the end of a course of study ("Assessment: Assessment Glossary," 2014).

~T~

Triangulation - The building of multiple sources of information or ideas to support a central finding or theme ("Dictionary of Student Outcome," 2003). An example of triangulation would be an assessment that incorporated surveys, interviews, and research papers.

~V~

Validity - Validity refers to the ability of an assessment to measure the construct or knowledge, skills, or abilities it purports to measure…Validity requires that the measurement is aligned with learning outcomes (*An Assessment Framework for the Community*, 2004).

VALUE Rubrics - *V*alid *A*ssessment of *L*earning in *U*ndergraduate *E*ducation. As part of AAC&U's Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative, the VALUE rubrics contribute to the national dialogue on assessment of college student learning. VALUE provides needed tools to assess students' own authentic work, produced across their diverse learning pathways and institutions, to determine whether and how well they are progressing toward graduation-level achievement in learning outcomes that both employers and faculty consider essential (Value rubric, 2009).

Vision - The goal of assessment of student learning is to improve student learning and thus help the College fulfill its educational mission and vision (State Fair Community College, n.d.). The vision of YCCC is stated as follows: YCCC will be a leader in educational excellence, providing a variety of programs that promote personal enrichment, academic growth and career development. We will support our region in meeting the challenges of a changing world by creating an innovative and active learning environment. *Related Term: mission*

Appendix I: Assessment Forms

Academic Programs & Courses Assessment Planning: For program and course level assessment of learning outcomes

Assessment Conference: After your assessment project has been completed, use this form to prepare for your Assessment Conference.
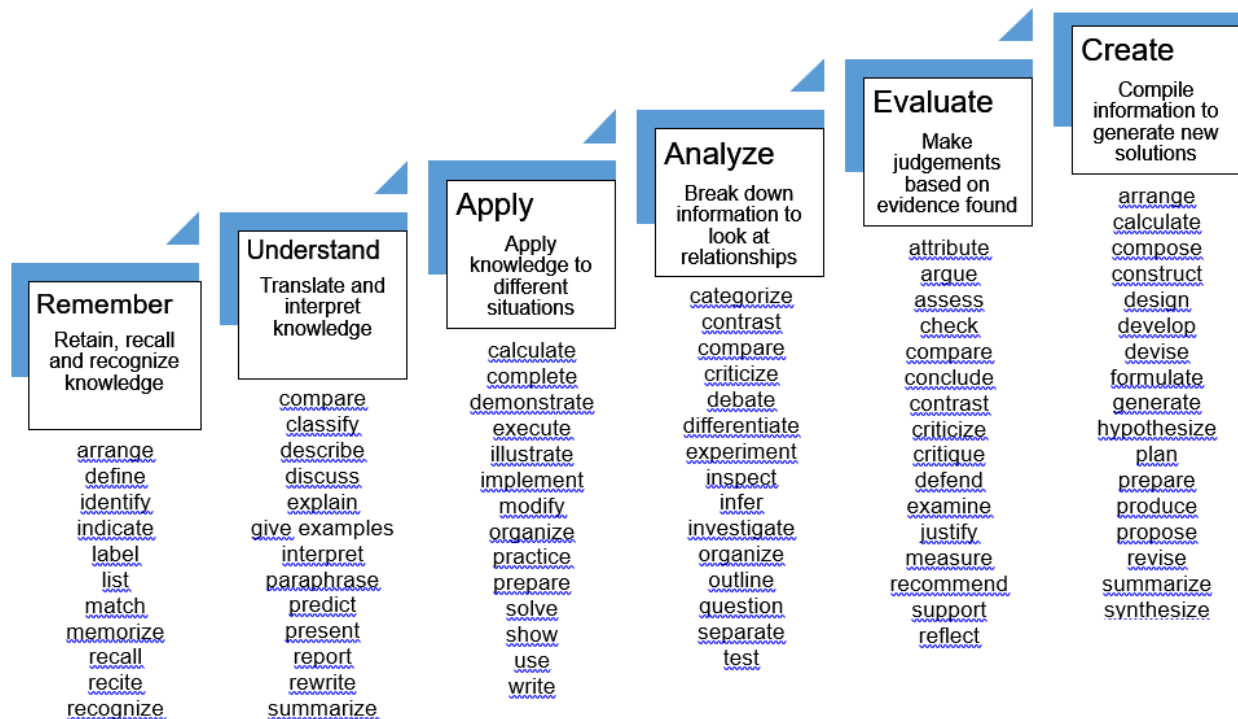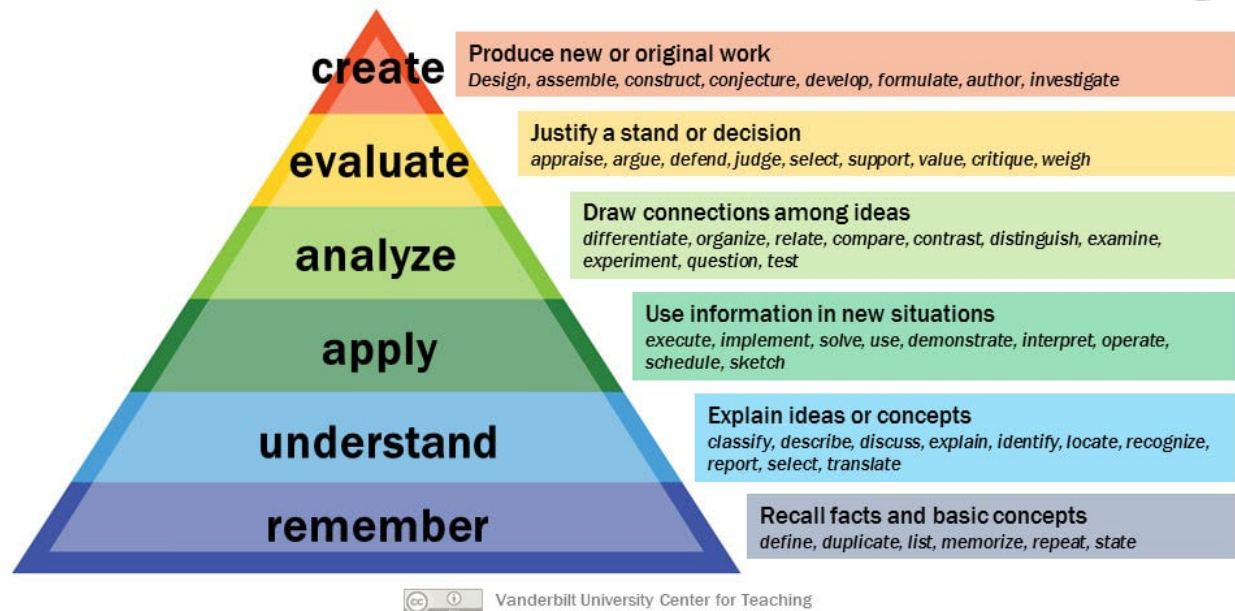
Co-curricular & Administrative Assessment Plan: For all co-curricular and administrative department assessment projects.

Governance, Committee, & Work Group Assessment Plan: For College Council, standing and ad hoc committees, and non-governance work groups.

New Initiative Proposal: Use this form to propose a new initiative. An assessment plan is embedded in this form.

Appendix II: Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy

create — Produce new or original work
Design, assemble, construct, conjecture, develop, formulate, author, investigate

evaluate — Justify a stand or decision
appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, critique, weigh

analyze — Draw connections among ideas
differentiate, organize, relate, compare, contrast, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test

apply — Use information in new situations
execute, implement, solve, use, demonstrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch

understand — Explain ideas or concepts
classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, locate, recognize, report, select, translate

remember — Recall facts and basic concepts
define, duplicate, list, memorize, repeat, state

Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching

Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
Retain, recall and recognize knowledge	Translate and interpret knowledge	Apply knowledge to different situations	Break down information to look at relationships	Make judgements based on evidence found	Compile information to generate new solutions
arrange	compare	calculate	categorize	attribute	arrange
define	classify	complete	contrast	argue	calculate
identify	describe	demonstrate	compare	assess	compose
indicate	discuss	execute	criticize	check	construct
label	explain	illustrate	debate	compare	design
list	give examples	implement	differentiate	conclude	develop
match	interpret	modify	experiment	contrast	devise
memorize	paraphrase	organize	inspect	criticize	formulate
recall	predict	practice	infer	critique	generate
recite	present	prepare	investigate	defend	hypothesize
recognize	report	solve	organize	examine	plan
	rewrite	show	outline	justify	prepare
	summarize	use	question	measure	produce
		write	separate	recommend	propose
			test	support	revise
				reflect	summarize
					synthesize

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