# Components of an Academic Assessment Plan
Institutional Effectiveness
USF System Office of Decision Support

Each degree program has a plan in the **System for Assessment Management (SAM),** which is an internally developed database available online. Access to SAM is granted through Institutional Effectiveness, and uses each person's Net ID/university system password to log in.

SAM is set up so each plan is customizable.
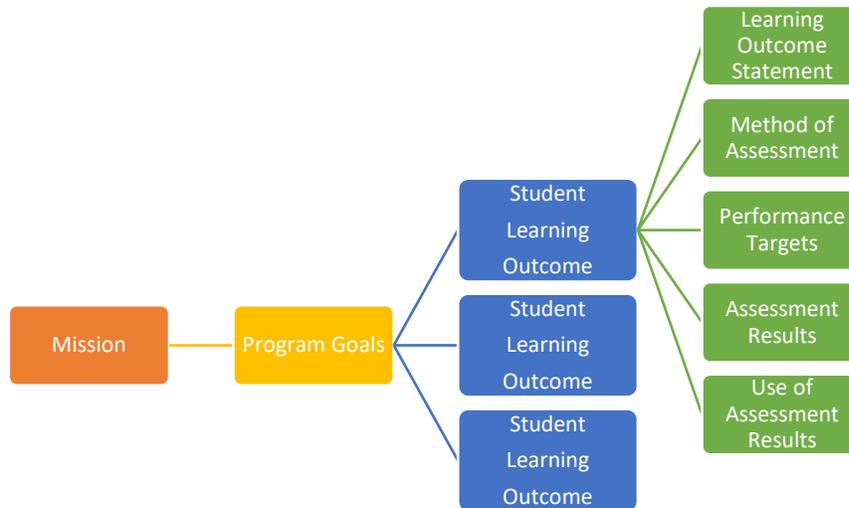
Academic programs are asked to input their mission statement and program goals, which can be edited at any time but carry forward year to year.

Under each program goal, there can be one or more student learning outcomes (SLOs). These are carried forward from year-to-year; however, programs are expected to adjust and update these on an annual basis. Undergraduate programs MUST have three areas: Content Specific Knowledge, Communication, and Critical Thinking.

Each SLO has five sections: a SLO statement, a method of assessment, performance targets, assessment results and use of assessment results. Institutional Effectiveness, heavily reviews these five sections.

Contributors from academic programs are required to input data and update each section of each SLO on an annual basis.

Completion Calendars

Assessments are due on a rotational schedule in two phases: Planning and Reporting

Planning phase: During the planning phase, each program should enter or revise their projected plan, which includes SLO statement, method of assessment, and performance targets. These will be reviewed by Institutional Effectiveness, during which comments will be provided. The program can change the plans at any time during the process.

Reporting phase: Programs should revise their plans (if necessary) and enter their results into Assessment Results and Use of Assessment Results. The final reports will be reviewed by Institutional Effectiveness. During the Reporting phase, the information gathered should be used to determine the subsequent year's assessment goals.

Each year's final assessments are used to complete required reports to the Provost's office, the Board of Governors. They are also gathered for five-year accreditation requirements submitted to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.
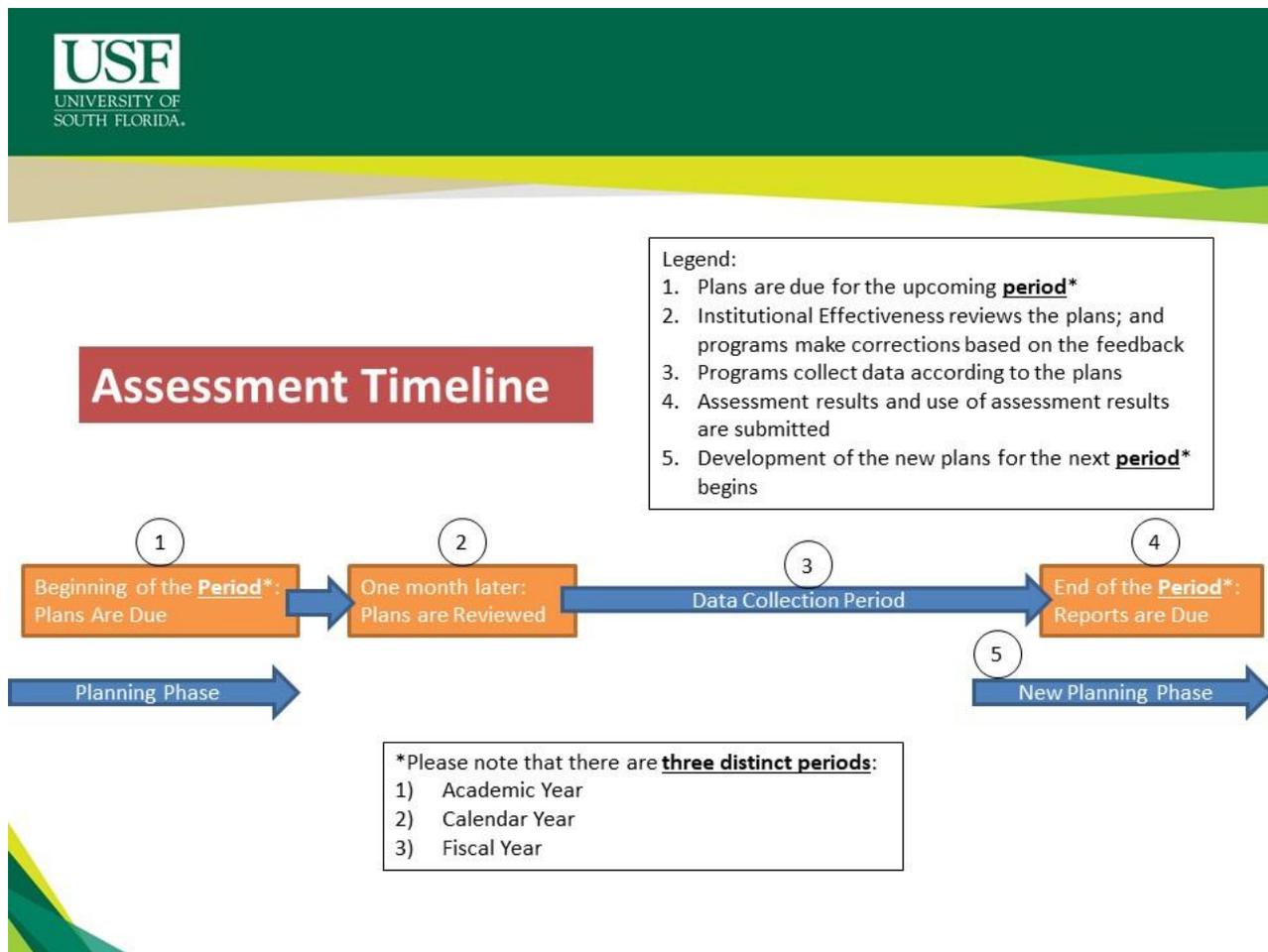
Components of Assessment

The following document contains a breakdown of each section and subsection within SAM, as well as, what information should be included.

Mission Statement:

This section should contain the department of the degree program's mission statement(s). Mission statement(s) can usually be found on the degree programs website. Double check that what is written in SAM matches the department or degree's mission. If correct, this can remain unedited.

Program Goals:

Program goals at the program level should comprise the knowledge, skills, and competencies each program expects its graduates to command upon graduation. Program goals are broad, over-arching statements that are central to each program's curriculum. They are not intended to be and should not be measureable outcomes. **Florida Board of Governors require <u>undergraduate programs</u> have at least the following 3 program goals:**

1. Mastery of discipline-specific knowledge and skills
2. Demonstration of critical thinking skills
3. Demonstration of communication skills.

Graduate degree programs are asked to design <u>one</u> program goal with a minimum of <u>one</u> SLO. Degree programs are free to add more program goals. There should be at least one SLO for each goal in undergraduate and graduate programs.

Learning Outcome and formatting the Learning Outcome Statement in SAM:

The statement of the SLO is the first subsection of the five-part SLO section, and is a specific statement about what students will be able to demonstrate after a certain level of instruction. SLOs are organized under a program goal and are measurable outcomes of that goal. In turn, each SLO has a specified method of assessment.

SLOs include: (1) substantive action verbs and (2) subjects who will perform the SLO

Method of Assessment:

This is the most important section of the SAM report. It describes how the subjects were assessed on the SLO. There are several methods that can be used. Each method has a criteria of what should be included in the section. Each SLO must have a clearly stated method of assessment specific to that SLO.

The method of assessment should be as specific as possible. Aspects of the method that should be included are as follows:

- **A description of the assessed assignment performed by all students in the program** (essays, internship evaluation, comprehensive exams, presentations, discussion board entry, etc.)

- **A statement on how the assessment specifically measures the task, information, or competency stated in the SLO.** (embedded test questions, rubrics, etc.)

- **A statement which delineates the course(s) in which the assessments were administered. If administered outside of a course, under what circumstances the assessment was administered.**

- **Which students in the program will be assessed** (first year students, graduating seniors, all students in the program, etc.) Remember that assessment methods cannot be reliant on external determinates such as the acceptance to a journal of conference, and must be designed so that all students within the program are represented in the assessment.

- **Include information on the sample if a sample of student work will be analyzed in lieu of all students** (percentage of the total number of students, the process of collecting it, etc.)

- **If employing a rubric, provide the following information:**

   o **Specific information on how it was developed and <u>validated</u>.** We encourage the use of previously established, valid rubrics. However, many programs design their own rubric to specifically match the criteria of the assessment. If using a previously validated rubric, include where it originated. If developing a rubric internally, include a statement on how its validity and reliability were addressed.

- **Information on who will be reviewing and rating the assessment.** Provide information on the number of raters and how they are related to the program. Raters should be professionals (preferably faculty), with some experience or training in how to use the rubric. Peers (students) are not appropriate individuals to be included as raters. It is important to note that most forms of assessment require multiple raters.

- **How inter- rater reliability will be addressed.** Almost all assessment types require multiple raters and therefore inter-rater reliability (IRR) should be considered. Assessments that use open-ended response, written, oral presentation, portfolio review or performance-based need multiple faculty raters to review each student's submission. From these independent faculty scores, a final score must be produced.

For example: If the program is using a sample of essays from qualifying courses to assess critical thinking skills, then the method of assessment section should include:

1. A statement on the type of assessment: essay format, from what class, etc.
2. Information on how the student papers will be evaluated to assess critical thinking skills and information on the prompt of the papers.
3. How the sample of student work was obtained (from what classes, was it by random selection, stratified random selection, etc.),
4. Percentage of the program's students are to be included in sample.
5. How many faculty members will rate each student paper (usually must be two or more).
6. How faculty scores will be tabulated to produce a final score for each student (how IRR will be addressed).
7. Information on how the rubric was developed and validated.

Performance Target:

Performance targets are internal predictions made by the program regarding the level of student achievement for that SLO. This section can be short and must only include a numerical prediction. The prediction should be stated in terms of rubric's parameters. For example if the rubric rates students on a scale of 1-5 for that SLO, the performance target should include a percentage of students and a predicted achievement rate:

For example: "Program implementation will be considered a success if 90% of the sample will achieve a final score of 4 or higher for this assessment."

Assessment Results:

The Assessment Results section should mirror the wording in the performance target section, but include the results of the assessment. **The total number of students assessed on each SLO should be indicated in this section.** If using a sample, the final number included in the sample should be indicated, as well as the adjusted percentage of the total number of students in the program. For assessment methods that require multiple raters, the final scores are sufficient for this section instead of including the independent scores, statistical analysis and final numbers for each student.

Assessment results can be reported in terms of percentage of students achieving at each category of the rubric. For example, if a program used a rubric that assessed students on a scale of 1-5, they might report the results as:

- Students achieving a final score of 5/5 was approximately 75% (n = 30).

- Students achieving a final score between 4-4.9/5 was 20% (n = 8).

- Students achieving a final score of 3-3.9/5 was 5% (n = 2).

- No students achieved a final score lower than a 3.

Use of Results:

The Use of Assessment Results section is very important, and the portion of the Assessment plan that is most commonly completed incorrectly. This portion is to be the area that describes intended improvements at the program level. It is important distinction to note: this is an assessment of the program, not its participants.

Programs should look at and think about what improvements or developments will be implemented **at the program level** in light of the assessment results. This section is <u>not</u> for programs to describe how they will change their assessment plan to yield greater levels of student achievement, or to elaborate on the assessment results in any way. In addition, this section is not meant for programs to rely how they will work with students differently to achieve greater results (e.g., advising students to seek tutoring).

Assessment is not linear and finite; it is continuous and seeks to assess program development on an annual basis (continual improvement). If all performance targets have been met within a plan, the program is asked to develop SLOs that improve new areas aside from what has already been "perfected."

Example 1: If the Critical Thinking assessment resulted in a significantly lower number of students achieving at the performance target, than the Use of Results section could include how and where in the program will reinforce critical thinking skills, what adjustments will be made to the curriculum, how program faculty will address the deficiency and other future improvements or developments.

Example 2: If the Critical Thinking assessment resulted in sufficient scores to indicate that the measured SLO had been met, then the program should include a statement that the program is functioning well in this area, as well as, a statement of the projected area of concentration for the subsequent year's assessment.