

Chapter 1: Getting Started

This chapter introduces the foundational concepts and institutional framework for academic assessment at Arkansas State University. It includes the Assessment Manual, outlines the university's annual assessment cycle, and provides guidance on evaluating co-curricular, extracurricular, and auxiliary units. These resources help faculty and staff understand the scope of assessment, where to begin, and how their efforts align with university-wide goals for continuous improvement.

- [Assessment Manual](#)
- [A-State Assessment Cycle](#)
- [Assessing Cocurricular, Extracurricular, and Auxiliary Units](#)

Assessment Manual

The purpose of this manual is to articulate Arkansas State University's (A-State) processes for executing student-learning assessment to its various constituencies. The overall intent of student-learning assessment at A-State is the continuous improvement of curriculum and student-learning opportunities. A process of assessment is essential to continuous improvement, and therefore, commitment to assessment must be deeply embedded in our core values. Assessment applies not only to student learning and educational outcomes, but also to our institution's approach to improving institutional effectiveness.

“What is Student Learning Assessment?”

“Assessment is the ongoing process of: 1.) Establishing clear, measurable expected outcomes of student learning, 2.) Ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes, 3.) Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our expectations, and 4.) Using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning”

Suskie, L. (2018). Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2009.

Our commitment to assessing student learning proceeds from the institution's [mission](#) and [learning outcomes](#). It involves faculty and co-curricular leaders at all points in the process and includes analysis of assessment results. Faculty and co-curricular leaders are subject-matter experts, and their input is respected and critical for thorough and effective student-learning assessment. Furthermore, assessment results are used to improve A-State's academic programs, co-curricular learning opportunities, ancillary services, and other operations.

This **Assessment Manual** outlines Arkansas State University's institutional approach to student-learning assessment. It is organized around three core areas:

- **A-State's assessment infrastructure**, including the shared governance committees and accreditor expectations that guide assessment practices;
- **Procedures for documenting student-learning assessment**, such as the use of Nuventive, Simple Syllabus, and university surveys; and
- **Processes for conducting student-learning assessment**, including program-level, general education, and cocurricular assessment cycles.

This manual is designed to support faculty, staff, and assessment leaders in aligning their practices with institutional goals and accreditation standards, fostering a culture of continuous improvement

across academic and cocurricular programs.

Assessment Infrastructure

The Office of Accreditation and Assessment utilizes a shared governance committee structure to make decisions, implement change, and oversee the evaluation of assessment efforts. The Office of Accreditation and Assessment coordinates these efforts through three committees that support accreditation and assessment.

Accreditation and Assessment Committee

The [Accreditation and Assessment Committee](#) (AAC) at A-State is charged with the primary responsibility of planning and directing assessment at the university level and for the [University Learning Outcomes](#). The AAC recognizes that faculty and co-curricular leaders are subject-matter experts, and their input is respected and critical for thorough and effective student-learning assessment at A-State.

Program Assessment Committee

The [Program-Assessment Committee](#) (PAC) at Arkansas State University is charged with the primary responsibility of planning, advising, and directing program-level assessment. The PAC acknowledges that faculty are subject-matter experts, and their input is respected and critical for thorough and effective student-learning assessment of each program offered at A-State.

Cocurricular Assessment Committee

The [Cocurricular Assessment Committee](#) (CAC) at Arkansas State University (A-State) is charged with the primary responsibility of planning and directing the assessment of co-curricular units. The CAC acknowledges that co-curricular leaders are experts in their field(s) and their input is respected and critical for thorough and effective student-learning assessment of the co-curricular units at A-State.

► **See:** [Shared Governance](#) for more information about shared governance committees at A-State.

At the highest level, the institution is assessed through [University Learning Outcomes](#) established by the Accreditation and Assessment Committee. These are institutional outcomes that all programs map to in the assessment process. Other assessment efforts reported to the Office of

Accreditation and Assessment include Program Assessment, General Education Assessment, and Cocurricular/Other Assessment.

Accreditor Expectations

A-State's institutional accreditor, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), and programmatic accreditors have expectations for the assessment of academic and cocurricular programs as a way of ensuring continuous improvement. The HLC lists their expectations for assessment in [Criterion for Accreditation 3](#) and [Assumed Practices C](#).

Procedures for Documenting Student-Learning Assessment

Using Nuventive

Nuventive is the university's official platform for documenting student-learning assessment. Faculty and assessment leaders use Nuventive to enter outcomes, methods, findings, and summaries that support program review and accreditation reporting. For step-by-step instructions, refer to the **Nuventive Book** in the Office of Accreditation & Assessment's Knowledge Base, which includes specific **How-To Guides** for managing workspaces, entering assessment data, and aligning outcomes with institutional goals.

➤ See: [Nuventive](#)

Syllabi

A-State syllabi are published in Simple Syllabus. Syllabus templates are determined by college deans and department chairs in conjunction with the Office of Accreditation and Assessment.

Syllabi published from fall 2024 and beyond are available in the [A-State Syllabus Library](#). Syllabi published between fall 2017 through summer 2024 may be requested from the Office of Accreditation and Assessment. Older syllabi are not stored by the Office of Accreditation and Assessment. A recorded [Simple Syllabus training video](#) is available online, and one-on-one, or group training may be requested from the Office of Accreditation and Assessment.

➤ See: [Simple Syllabus](#)

Leaving the Den Exit Survey

The Leaving the Den exit survey is administered to all graduating students during the weeks surrounding August, December, and January commencements. The survey includes several blocks of questions, including questions about students' educational experiences, questions about each university learning outcome, and questions about students' post-graduation plans. Leaving the Den data is accessible on the [Knowledge Base Page](#) or by request from the Office of Accreditation and Assessment. The data can be disaggregated by graduation term, college, degree, and major.

Processes for Conducting Student-Learning Assessment

Program Assessment

The Office of Accreditation and Assessment requires assessment at the program level. Course level assessments may be used as "key assessments" at the program level. Refer to your specialized accreditor standards to determine whether course-level assessment is required for your accreditation purposes. Programs are assessed by the Program Assessment Committee (see [Committees](#)) using the [Program Assessment Rubric](#) on a bi-annual basis in either odd or even academic years, with three distinct deadlines for Outcomes/Methods (March 15th), Findings (October 15th), and End of Cycle Summaries (May 15th), to help keep assessment leaders on-track.

► See: [A-State Assessment Cycle](#) for more details on the assessment deadlines.

Program-Level Student Learning Outcomes

[Program-Level Student Learning Outcomes](#) are determined by the department. Program Outcomes must include student learning outcomes (i.e., skills and knowledge), but may also include administrative outcomes (i.e., faculty to student ratios, cohort sizes, etc.) and/or student achievement outcomes (i.e., retention and completion, board pass rates, etc.). These may be decided by a specialized accreditor, by the department, or through Program Review. To update your program-level student learning outcomes, contact the Office of Accreditation and Assessment.

Certificate-Level Student Learning Outcomes

All certificate programs require a minimum of three outcomes. These may be learning outcomes or a combination of learning and administrative outcomes

Determining Appropriate Outcomes

1. For programs with certificates that are fully embedded within a degree program:
 1. Track and report the number of students completing the certificate each year. If student enrollment for the certificate program exceeds five students, the certificate must be assessed separately from the larger degree program. If fewer than five

students complete the certificate in an academic year, answer "Yes" to the low enrollment question on the Program Information page.

2. If you are unsure as to whether your certificate is embedded, consider the following question: Are the certificate outcomes (a) a subset of the parent degree outcomes, or do they (b) represent a distinct set of competencies?
 1. If (a)—the certificate outcomes are a subset of degree outcomes:
 1. You may adopt the parent degree outcomes and assessment methods
 2. Disaggregate your data by student program enrollment (Note: Program type is available as a filter in Nuventive's Canvas dashboards. Faculty would need to use Canvas for grading to enable this.
 2. If (b)—the certificate represents distinct competencies:
 1. Develop unique outcomes and methods to assess the certificate of program specific competencies.

Special Requirements

Canceled Programs: Canceled programs should be assessed until they are fully taught out. Assessment requirements will change when fewer than five students are enrolled in the program.

Concentration or Emphasis Areas: Concentrations and emphasis areas are all included within the same umbrella workspace. These are differentiated where the concentration or emphasis area diverges in assessment. For instance, if the concentration or emphasis areas diverge at the outcome level, use the "Outcome Short Name" within Nuventive to delineate between concentrations/emphases. See the example below.

Example: Art BFA has two emphases, Art Education and Studio.

For core or shared outcomes, there is no need for a prefix in the outcome short name. To differentiate outcomes by emphasis, Art BFA will use a prefix of "Art Education:" or "Studio:" before naming the outcome (i.e., "Art Education: Communication" or "Studio: Content Knowledge"). Ensure that you use the colon between the prefix and outcome short name.

► For more information on external accreditation and consultant-led reviews, see the [External Academic Reviews page](#) in the [Accreditation Knowledge Base book](#).

General Education Assessment

General Education Assessment is performed at the course level and overseen by the General Education Committee through a process called Quadrennial Review.

- [GEC Core SLOs](#)
- [Quad Review Process and Calendar](#)
- [Quad Rubric](#)

➤ See: [Nuventive](#)

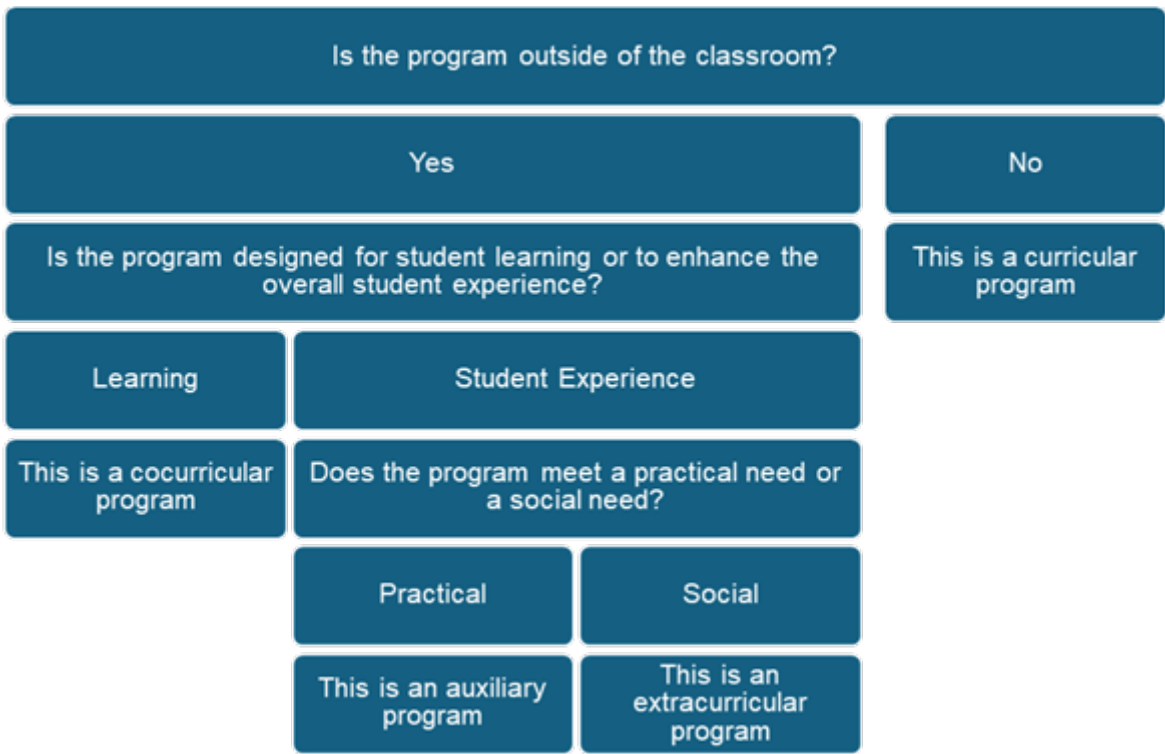
Cocurricular and Other Assessments

In the context of higher education, the terms cocurricular, extracurricular, and auxiliary units refer to different types of activities and support systems that complement academic learning and enhance the overall student experience.

Cocurricular programs and activities are structured activities that complement the academic curriculum. They often align with educational goals.

Extracurricular programs and activities are voluntary activities that students participate in outside of the academic curriculum. These activities may not directly relate to academic goals but contribute to personal growth, social skills, and community engagement.

Auxiliary units provide additional services and support to enhance the educational experience but are not directly tied to academic or cocurricular activities. They often help facilitate student life, well-being, and institutional operations.



Assessment Requirements

Cocurricular Programs	At least one learning outcome.
Extracurricular Programs	At least one outcome. It can be either a learning or an administrative outcome.
Auxiliary Units	At least one administrative outcome.

See More

- See: [**A-State Assessment Cycle**](#)
- See: [**Nuventive \(Link to Knowledge Base Nuventive Book\)**](#)
- See: [**Simple Syllabus \(Link to Knowledge Base Simple Syllabus Book\)**](#)

A-State Assessment Cycle

This calendar outlines the recurring assessment responsibilities for academic and non-academic units at Arkansas State University. It supports continuous improvement and aligns with institutional and programmatic accreditation expectations.

Assessment Schedule by Year and Unit

Year / College	Due	Activity	Details
Odd Academic Years College of Liberal Arts and Communication College of Agriculture Veterinary Medicine Neil Griffin College of Business Nursing and Health Professions Auxiliary and Extracurricular Programs	March 15	<i>Program Outcomes & Methods</i>	Adjust Assessment Outcomes & Methods based on two prior academic years of data.
Even Academic Years Education & Behavioral Science Engineering & Computer Science Beck College of Sciences & Mathematics University College Graduate School Cocurricular Programs	March 15	<i>Program Outcomes & Methods</i>	Adjust Assessment Outcomes & Methods based on two prior academic years of data.
Every Year All Colleges	October 15	<i>Findings</i>	Report Findings on student learning and program outcomes, including data and reflections on curricular effectiveness.

Year / College	Due	Activity	Details
As Needed All Colleges	As Needed	<i>Mapping & End of Cycle Summary</i>	Update Curriculum Maps on an as-needed basis prompted by curricular changes or strategies to improve learning outcomes. Complete the End of Cycle Summary based on prior assessment efforts and current program needs—summaries function as an executive summary and might benefit a program needing to scale efforts.

Continuous Improvement Note

The adjusted assessment calendar alleviates some of the process burden of assessment while also allowing assessment leaders to focus on continuous improvement for a healthier assessment cycle. When assessment leaders are reviewing **Assessment Outcomes & Methods** there will be an expectation that programs leave the “monitoring phase” of assessment and move toward **continuous improvement**

Example: if you have held the same methods for a few years and each year the method showed similar findings, it may be time to adjust the method.

Current Assessment Calendars and Schedules

The Office of Accreditation and Assessment maintains current assessment calendars, reporting schedules, and review timelines in SharePoint. These documents are updated as needed and should be considered the official source for current deadlines and reporting cycles.

“ [Assessment Calendars and Schedules](#)

Access the most current assessment calendars, reporting schedules, review timelines, and due dates.

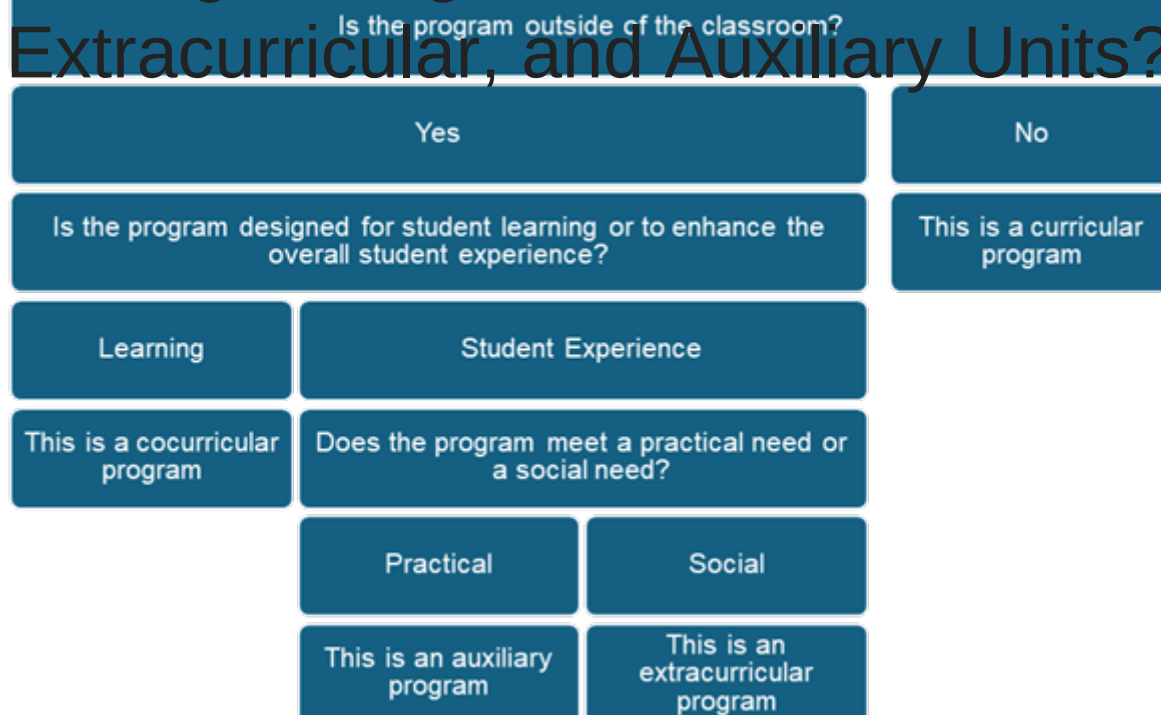
- **Assessment Calendar** – Annual schedule of assessment activities, committee reviews, reporting milestones, and institutional assessment

initiatives.

- **Assessment Due Dates** – Official deadlines for Outcomes & Methods, Findings, Mapping updates, and other assessment reporting requirements.

Assessing Cocurricular, Extracurricular, and Auxiliary Units

Distinguishing between Cocurricular, Extracurricular, and Auxiliary Units?



Defining Cocurricular, Extracurricular, and Auxiliary Units?

Cocurricular

Cocurricular activities are structured activities that complement the academic curriculum. They often align with educational goals.

It is required to develop at least one learning outcome.

Extracurricular

Extracurricular activities are voluntary activities that students participate in outside of the academic curriculum. These activities may not directly relate to academic goals but contribute to personal growth, social skills, and community engagement.

It is required to develop at least one outcome. It can be either a learning or an administrative outcome.

Auxiliary

Auxiliary units provide additional services and support to enhance the educational experience but are not directly tied to academic or co-curricular activities. They often help facilitate student life, well-being, and institutional operations.

It is required to develop at least one administrative outcome.

General Considerations? When Developing Outcomes

- **Learning Outcome**
 - This is an outcome that can be directly tied to student learning (i.e., student grades, cognitive development, leadership skills, etc.).
 - **Administrative Outcome**
 - This is an outcome that is tied to the administration of your unit (i.e., number of students served, effectiveness of service, etc.)
 - **Alignment with Institutional Goals**
 - Ensure that assessment methods align with the institution's overall mission and strategic plan, or university learning outcomes.
 - **Continuous Improvement**
 - Use assessment findings to inform program development and enhancements, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.
 - **Stakeholder Involvement**
 - Engage students, faculty, and staff in the assessment process to create a comprehensive understanding of outcomes and needs.
-

Rubric Overview?

This rubric evaluates the completeness and quality of program assessment reports. Each category is rated as **Exemplary**, **Good**, **Developing**, or **Needs Improvement**.

Legend

- **Exemplary** —  Green
- **Good** —  Yellow
- **Developing** —  Orange
- **Needs Improvement** —  Red

Cocurricular, Extracurricular, and Auxiliary Unit Assessment Rubric

	Exemplary	Good	Developing	Needs Improvement
Program Information				
Program Information	All program information sections and distinctions are complete.	Most program information sections and distinctions are complete.	Less than 50% of program information section complete OR no distinction is present.	Program information not started.
Assessment Schedule (Is the schedule the same?)	All outcomes are assessed within a two-year assessment review cycle (Accreditation and Assessment Office).	All outcomes are assessed within a four-year assessment cycle (Higher Learning Commission).	Most outcomes are assessed within a four-year assessment cycle (Higher Learning Commission).	Fewer than 50% of outcomes are assessed within a four-year assessment cycle (Higher Learning Commission).
Outcomes				
Learning and Administrative Outcomes	One appropriate outcome is present.	One appropriate outcome is present, but additional information may be needed.	A) The present outcome is not appropriate; OR B) outcome is not distinct.	A) One appropriate outcome is not present.
Methods				
Outcome-Method Alignment	Clearly defined alignment between the outcome(s) and selected method(s) as described in the report.	Somewhat clearly defined alignment between the outcome(s) and selected method(s) as described in the report.	Alignment between outcome(s) and method(s) is not clear.	No evidence of alignment between outcome(s) and method(s).

Method & Method Type	Method(s) are clear; have face validity for specific purposes and student learning or administrative outcomes; use both direct and indirect method(s).	Method(s) are clear; have face validity for specific purposes and student learning or administrative outcomes; use ONLY direct OR indirect method(s).	Method(s) are clear; lack face validity for specific purposes OR student learning or administrative outcomes; use ONLY direct OR indirect method(s).	Method(s) lack clarity; lack face validity for specific purposes OR student learning or administrative outcomes; use ONLY direct OR indirect method(s).
Method Target	Clear student or staff focused targets (i.e., rubric percentages by category; overall test and item performance; licensure exam scores; etc.). Rationale for choosing target is articulated (e.g., based on local standards, historical trends, external standards, etc.).	Clear student or staff focused targets; target is not delimited (i.e., lacks rubric percentages by category; overall test and item performance; licensure exam scores; etc.). Rationale for choosing target is articulated (e.g., based on local standards, historical trends, external standards, etc.).	Clear student or staff focused targets; targets are not delimited (i.e., lacks rubric percentages by category; overall test and item performance; licensure exam scores; etc.). No rationale for choosing target is articulated (e.g., based on local standards, historical trends, external standards, etc.).	Unclear target OR not student or staff focused target; target is not delimited (i.e., lacks rubric percentages by category; overall test and item performance; licensure exam scores; etc.). No rationale for choosing target is articulated (e.g., based on local standards, historical trends, external standards, etc.).
Findings				
Data Reported (e.g., data collection/method of sampling, item analysis, frequency counts, instrument norming statistics, etc.)	Results presented in a clear, easy to interpret format; explanation of data collection method clearly articulated to include such items as sample size, sampling method and background of students or staff.	Results presented but take some time to find and/or interpret; some information about data collection methodology provided.	Results presented but were not clear or easy to interpret; very little information about data collection methodology provided.	Results are not presented.
Analysis & Reflection	Interpretation of results clearly presented and appropriate based on analysis of the data; if possible, combines analysis of direct and indirect measures in context to the relevant administrative system.	Interpretation of results is somewhat clear and appropriate based on analysis of the data in context to the relevant administrative system.	Interpretation of results is unclear or inappropriate based on analysis of the data in context to the relevant administrative system.	Interpretation of results not reported.

Action Plan	Clearly identifies plans for action based on assessment results, including timeline for implementation and persons responsible for implementation; action plans may include the following scenarios: 1) Target Exceeded—Consider longitudinal data and whether the assessment method should change, 2) Target Met—Continue to monitor over an identified timeline, 3) Target Not Met—Improvement Plan articulated, OR recognition of invalid/unreliable assessment process changes needed.	Evidence of plans for action tied to assessment results but may not identify a timeline or area for implementation or persons responsible for implementation and/or all possible scenarios of assessment results.	Evidence of plans for action not clearly tied to assessment results and does not identify a timeline or area for implementation or all scenarios of assessment results.	Does not specify plans for action based on assessment results.
Personnel	Personnel are listed and more than the assessment leader are involved in the full assessment process. The Process is described.	Personnel are listed and more than the assessment leader are involved in the full assessment process.	The assessment leader is listed.	No personnel are listed.

Evidence (e.g., raw data, rubrics, meeting minutes, student artifacts (free of all identifying information), etc.)	Sufficient evidence is provided to corroborate all data reported, such as rubrics; spreadsheets with rubric scores; spreadsheets with rubric scores; interrater reliability information; aggregated test/item analysis; test psychometric statistics; disaggregated test/item analysis by groups of students or staff with relevant characteristics; licensure exam scores; surveys; survey results; focus group themes/transcripts; meeting minutes; advisory board feedback or analysis; etc. Evidence is a mixture of direct and indirect measures. This is true for ALL findings.	Supporting evidence provided is linked to data, but partially substantiates data reported and is a mixture of direct and indirect measures; this is true for MOST findings.	The link between finding and supporting evidence is difficult to determine; this is true for SOME findings. There is not a mixture of direct and indirect measures.	No substantiating evidence provided.
Mapping				
Completion	All units map to at least one ULO and three HLC criteria; All maps (i.e., University Learning Outcomes, administrative outcomes) are complete within the workspace.	All units map to at least one outcome on the ULO map, but no other maps are complete.	Both the ULO and HLC criteria map is incomplete.	No work appears on any map.
Assessment Over Time	Assessments appear consistently throughout the unit's maps.	Assessments appear inconsistently on the unit's maps.	Assessments are concentrated in one area of the unit's map.	Assessments do not appear on the unit's maps.

Possible Assessments?

Cocurricular Assessment Examples?

Study Abroad, Academic Clubs, Service-Learning Programs

- **Surveys and Feedback Forms**
 - Gather student feedback on their experiences, perceived learning outcomes, and areas for improvement.
 - **Learning Outcomes Assessment**
 - Develop specific learning objectives for each activity and assess whether students meet these through reflective essays, presentations, or projects.
 - **Participation and Engagement Metrics**
 - Track attendance, involvement in leadership roles, and the number of students participating over time.
 - **Portfolios**
 - Encourage students to compile work, reflections, and artifacts that demonstrate their learning and development through cocurricular activities
-

Extracurricular Assessment Examples?

Sports Teams, Arts and Performance Groups, Clubs and Organizations

- **Event Participation Metrics**
 - Measure attendance and participation rates in events and activities, analyzing trends over time.
 - **Peer Assessment**
 - Encourage students to assess each other's contributions and teamwork skills within clubs or teams.
 - **Impact Surveys**
 - Conduct pre- and post-participation surveys to measure changes in skills (e.g., leadership, teamwork) and personal growth.
 - **Retention and Satisfaction Surveys**
 - Assess how involvement in extracurriculars affects student retention rates and overall satisfaction with their college experience.
-

Auxiliary Assessment Examples?

Student Health Services, Career Services, Housing and Residential Life

- **Service Utilization Metrics**
 - Track the number of students using services (e.g., counseling sessions, health services) and analyze trends.
- **Outcome Evaluations**
 - Use assessments like satisfaction surveys to gauge student satisfaction with the services provided and the effectiveness of those services.
- **Performance Metrics**

- For units like career services, measure outcomes such as job placement rates, internship success, and employer satisfaction.

- **Focus Groups and Interviews**

- Conduct qualitative assessments to gain deeper insights into student needs, experiences, and areas for improvement.