

## Syllabus

### Course Overview

If you or others at your current or future institution need a clearer understanding of assessment—what it really means, why it is necessary, how it is conducted, how it can be used—then you join many other professionals in higher education! Assessment and evaluation of learning are essential not only for improvement in education but also for accountability to employers, communities, and families, and for purposes of accreditation. A recent report of the National Institute of Learning Outcomes Assessment stated the importance of assessment very well:

Perhaps at no other time has the value of higher education been questioned to the extent it is today. The criticisms of the enterprise are multifaceted, from escalating costs outpacing inflation to the inability to graduate larger numbers of those who start college. Employers say too many graduates are unprepared for what is expected of them in the workplace. Too often, institutions have little to show about what students gain from their studies and what is being done to improve the student experience. (National Institute of Learning Outcomes Assessment, 2018, p. 24).

An effective, practical way to respond to such criticism is to demonstrate effectiveness through the assessment of learning outcomes. Assessment focuses specifically on documenting student learning and on improving the educational process.

This course provides the tools to enable you to put into practice what is known about assessment. It introduces you to the language of assessment, the controversy and consensus that has evolved on campuses, means to develop expected outcomes of learning and to measure student achievement of those outcomes, processes for evaluating results in a meaningful way, and strategies for using the results to improve student learning and for establishing a culture of assessment.

As a result of this course, you will be able to plan for assessing student learning outcomes at the program, department, and institutional levels; to explain the relationship of assessment to accreditation; and to articulate how to improve and sustain efforts to assess student learning. You will demonstrate these outcomes through a course project that is an actual plan to assess student learning outcomes, your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan, to be presented in two parts: a formal presentation for a specific audience and a rationale paper that explains the reasons for decisions made in the plan.

### Kaltura Activities

In this course, you may use Kaltura or a similar technology to create your final assignment. Refer to [Using Kaltura \[PDF\]](#) for more information about this courseroom tool.

*Note:* If you require the use of assistive technology or alternative communication methods to participate in these activities, please contact [DisabilityServices@Capella.edu](mailto:DisabilityServices@Capella.edu) to request accommodations.

### ePortfolio

You are required to save your course project to ePortfolio. Online ePortfolios serve two key purposes: 1) to support learning and reflection, and 2) to be used as a showcase tool. Your learning journey can be documented, and ePortfolios contribute to lifelong learning and growth through reflection and sharing. Online ePortfolios can also be shared with employers and peers to present artifacts that demonstrate your accomplishments at Capella. To make an online portfolio useful, it is essential that it is organized clearly and that important files of any format are accessible. Read the [Online ePortfolio Guidelines \[PDF\]](#) to ensure you set up your online portfolio correctly. For more information on ePortfolio, visit the Campus [ePortfolio](#) page.

#### Reference

National Institute of Learning Outcomes Assessment. (2018). *Assessment that matters: Trending towards practices that document authentic student learning* [PDF]. Retrieved from <http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/documents/NILOA2018SurveyReport.pdf>

### Course Competencies

(Read Only)

To successfully complete this course, you will be expected to:

- 1 Analyze the controversy and consensus that has evolved in higher education regarding learning outcomes assessment.
- 2 Explain effective assessment processes.
- 3 Design strategies to assess and evaluate learning outcomes at the program, course, department, or institutional level.
- 4 Formulate strategies for utilizing assessment results to promote improvement and accountability.

- 5 Communicate in a manner that is scholarly, professional, and consistent with expectations for members of the education profession.

**Course Prerequisites**

*There are no prerequisites for this course.*

**Syllabus >> Course Materials****Required**

The materials listed below are required to complete the learning activities in this course.

**Library**

The following required readings are provided in the Capella University Library or linked directly in this course. To find specific readings by journal or book title, use [Journal and Book Locator](#). Refer to the [Journal and Book Locator library guide](#) to learn how to use this tool.

- Banta, T. W., & Blaich, C. (2011). Closing the assessment loop. *Change*, 43(1), 22–27.
- Ewell, P. T., & Jankowski, N. A. (2015). Accreditation as opportunity: Serving two purposes with assessment. In Kuh, G. D., Ikenberry, S. O., Jankowski, N., Cain, T. R., Ewell, P. H., & Kinzie, J. *Using evidence of student learning to improve higher education* (pp. 146–159). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Kinzie, J. (2010). Perspectives from campus leaders on the current state of student learning outcomes assessment. *Assessment Update*, 22(5), 1–15.
- Suskie, L. (2018). Assessing student learning: A common sense guide (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

### External Resource

Please note that URLs change frequently. While the URLs were current when this course was designed, some may no longer be valid. If you cannot access a specific link, contact your instructor for an alternative URL. Permissions for the following links have been either granted or deemed appropriate for educational use at the time of course publication.

- American Association for Higher Education. (1996). Nine principles of good practice for assessing student learning. Retrieved from <https://www2.indstate.edu/assessment/docs/ninePrinciples.pdf>
- Braskamp, L. A., & Engberg, M. E. (2014). Guidelines for judging the effectiveness of assessing student learning [PDF]. Retrieved from <http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/documents/BraskampGuidelines.pdf>
- Hutchings, P. (2010, April). Opening doors to faculty involvement in assessment [PDF]. *National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment*. Retrieved from <http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/documents/PatHutchings.pdf>
- Hutchings, P., Ewell, P., & Banta, T. (2012). AAHE principles of good practice: Aging nicely. Retrieved from <http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/PrinciplesofAssessment.html>
- Miller, M. A. (2012). From denial to acceptance: The stages of assessment [PDF]. Retrieved from <http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/documents/MillerOcPaper13.pdf>
- National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. (2018, April 16). Why are we assessing? Retrieved from <https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Viewpoint-Why-Are-We-Assessing.pdf>
- National Institute of Learning Outcomes Assessment. (2018). Assessment that matters: Trending towards practices that document authentic student learning [PDF]. Retrieved from <http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/documents/NILOA2018SurveyReport.pdf>
- Provezis, S. (2010). Regional accreditation and student learning outcomes: Mapping the territory [PDF]. *National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment*. Retrieved from <http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/documents/Provezis.pdf>
- Rogers, M. (2017, Fall). The journey of improvement: How an institution enhanced the quality of their assessment process [PDF]. *Intersection*, 22–25. Retrieved from [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.aalhe.org/resource/resmgr/docs/Int/AAHLE\\_Fall\\_2017\\_Intersection.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.aalhe.org/resource/resmgr/docs/Int/AAHLE_Fall_2017_Intersection.pdf)
- Suskie, L. (2014, February 7). What is institutional effectiveness? [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.lindasuskie.com/apps/blog/show/41357706-what-is-institutional-effectiveness->
- Suskie, L. (2014, March 17). What is good assessment? A second look [PDF]. Retrieved from <http://www.lindasuskie.com/apps/blog/show/41934533-what-is-good-assessment-a-second-look>
- Suskie, L. (2015, March 23). Setting meaningful benchmarks or standards [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.lindasuskie.com/apps/blog/show/43191428-setting-meaningful-benchmarks-or-standards>
- Suskie, L. (2018, May 27). What are the characteristics of well-stated learning goals? [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.lindasuskie.com/apps/blog/show/45689916-what-are-the-characteristics-of-well-stated-learning-goals->

### Suggested

The following materials are recommended to provide you with a better understanding of the topics in this course. These materials are not required to complete the course, but they are aligned to course activities and assessments and are highly recommended for your use.

### Optional

The following optional materials are offered to provide you with a better understanding of the topics in this course. These materials are not required to complete the course.

### Integrated Materials

#### Hardware

Capella University requires learners to meet certain minimum computer requirements. The following hardware may go beyond those minimums and is required to complete learning activities in this course. **Note:** If you already have the following hardware, you do not need to purchase it. Visit the Course Materials page on Campus for more information.

#### Kaltura

1. Headset with microphone

## Projects

### Project >> Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan

#### Project Overview

This course project involves creating a practical plan for assessing student learning outcomes at the program, department, or institutional level. Specifically, this means identifying and addressing the need for assessing student learning at your institution or one that you select to use for this course; developing goals for learning as well as specific objectives that students are to achieve; identifying stakeholders and describing how they will be involved in assessment efforts; and determining strategies to carry out the assessment, to use and understand the results, and to disseminate the outcomes of the assessment efforts. You will design your course project in such a way that you will be able to propose it for implementation at your current (or future) institution.

Below are the individual components that comprise the project.

### Learning Goals, Assessment Instruments, and Standards (Unit 6)

For this assignment, you will begin constructing your course project, the Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan. Your project will not be just a paper about assessment, but a real-world, on-the-job, practical plan that you are encouraged to propose for implementation either in your current position or in the future.

First, keeping in mind that you will be proposing this plan to decision-makers who will consider whether to implement your plan, you will develop an introduction that concisely summarizes the program, course, department, or experience that you have selected for your course project. The introduction will also describe how you propose to apply the cycle of assessment to your plan to assess the learning outcomes of students or trainees in a specific learning situation.

Then you will present the first three sections of the actual proposed assessment plan: the learning goals that students are to achieve, the means of measuring their achievement of the goals, and the standards and/or targets to define successful achievement. Each of these sections will be followed by an explanation of the reasons—your rationale—for the decisions you made for the sections of the proposed plan. Your explanations are to be well supported by the required course readings, because when we develop assessment, we establish our credibility by using and citing authoritative sources.

### Stakeholders and Action Plan to Prepare for Assessment (Unit 8)

For this assignment, you will continue constructing your course project, the Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan. Your project will not be just a paper about assessment, but a real-world, on-the-job, practical plan that you are encouraged to propose for implementation either in your current position or in the future.

Still keeping in mind that you will be proposing this plan to a decision-maker who will consider whether to implement your plan, you will develop three additional components of your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan:

1. The components that describes the stakeholders and their roles in the assessment effort.
2. The action plan needed for effective implementation of the assessment effort.
3. The introduction to the final component of your plan, "Closing the Loop," in which you will explain how your plan to assess learning outcomes connects to the larger context of the effectiveness of the program, department, or institution under which such assessment falls.

Each of these sections will be followed by an explanation of the reasons—your rationale—for the decisions you made for the sections of the proposed plan.

### Presentation of Assessment Plan (Unit 10)

Your presentation of your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan, compiled from your Unit 6 and Unit 8 assignments and your discussions in Units 8 and 9, is to be converted to a PowerPoint presentation or a Kaltura presentation. You will create the presentation for a specific audience, such as a committee, an advisory board or a board of directors, or staff or faculty attending a department meeting. Be sure to follow the instructions for constructing the presentation carefully, for this is to be a professional presentation.

In the second component of your course project, the Rationale Paper, you will explain and support the decisions you made for your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan. This Rationale Paper is to begin with an introduction that explains the meaning and value of assessment, examines common misconceptions about assessment, and presents strategies for engaging faculty or staff members in assessment efforts.

#### Project Components

Activity	Grade Weight (%)
u04q1 - Quiz: Learning Goal Statements	10
u06a1 - Learning Goals, Assessment Instruments, and Standards	15
u08a1 - Stakeholders and Action Plan to Prepare for Assessment	20
u10a1 - Presentation of Assessment Plan	25

## Unit 1 >> Defining Assessment in Higher Education

### Introduction

What is assessment? What does it mean to assess something? Before you start your work in this course, first make sure that you know what the term actually means in higher education. While we have all heard it used in a general way, it pertains specifically to the assessment of learning in a higher education setting—that is, what students (or people engaged in training) know and can do with their knowledge. You have experience with assessment already; if you have not been directly involved in assessment in your career, you have certainly had your own knowledge, skills, and abilities assessed throughout your education.

Obviously, assessment is necessary for measuring what students learn in their academic courses and programs. But is assessment done outside of the curriculum? Absolutely! Learning happens not only in the classroom but in any experience in which students or trainees are meant to be learning something. Why do we conduct assessment? The purpose of assessment is two-fold: improvement and accountability. By assessing learning outcomes, we know better where improvements can be made. And by documenting the results of assessment, we can demonstrate accountability. That is, we can show evidence that we are doing what we claim to be doing: educating students or trainees.

In this unit, you will try a Discovering Assessment and Evaluation quiz to help you make the distinction between assessment and evaluation and prevent the common error of confusing the meaning of the two terms.

### Learning Activities

#### u01s1 - Studies

## Readings

Use [\*Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide\*](#) to read the following:

- Chapter 1, "What Is Assessment?," pages 7–14.
  - Pay particular attention to the definition and the stages of assessment as presented on pages 8–9; you will use List 1.1, the Four-Step Teaching-Learning-Assessment Process, as the most complete definition throughout this course. Note how assessment differs from evaluation, as presented on page 12.
- Chapter 2, "The Many Settings for Student Learning and Assessment," pages 15–22.
  - Note the various settings in which assessment is appropriate; consider other settings that you may know of in higher education.

## Multimedia

Complete the following Capella multimedia presentations:

- [Interview with Natasha Jankowski, NILOA](#).
  - In this interview, Dr. Natasha Jankowski, Director of the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), discusses the importance of effective assessment for the purposes of institutional accreditation.
- [What Is Assessment?](#)
  - This media piece presents an overview of assessment's importance to curriculum design.

#### u01s1 - Learning Components

- Examine strategies for assessing learning outcomes in programs, departments, and institutions.
- Define the contemporary meaning of assessment.

## u01s2 - Discovering Assessment and Evaluation

### Multimedia

Complete the following Capella multimedia presentation:

- Discovering Assessment and Evaluation.
  - In this brief ungraded quiz, you will check your knowledge of the difference between assessment and evaluation.
  - In this unit's first discussion, you will have the opportunity to share your thinking about the quiz questions.

## u01s2 - Learning Components

- Define the contemporary meaning of assessment.

## u01s3 - What Is Assessment?

### Assessment Versus Evaluation: A Deeper Dive

In the most practical way of considering it, "Assessment is simply deciding what we want students to learn and making sure they learn it" (Suskie, 2018, p. 7). Another prominent assessment expert put it this way: "Assessment begins with simply wondering whether what you do all day is contributing to what you hope your efforts can accomplish" (Bresciani, 2011, p. 1).

*Oh, that sounds simple enough. Then why does assessment seem to be such a challenge?*

One possible reason why assessment seems to be challenging is confusion about the term itself. *Assessment* has been used to convey a range of meanings, some of which are actually something else: evaluation. To eliminate confusion, in this course, we will make a clear distinction between the two terms. In addition to the definition of *assessment* presented in the readings, the "What Is Assessment?" resource, and the Discovering Assessment and Evaluation quiz, we will consider one more from a highly respected source, the *Degree Qualifications Profile*.

**Assessment:** A process for the collection and analysis of evidence about the achievement of student learning outcomes used to determine student proficiency and improve or to demonstrate the effectiveness of an educational program or institution (National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, n.d.).

*But what about institutional assessment? Don't we assess our programs, our curriculum, our own work? Isn't that what we are doing when we look for institutional effectiveness?*

Two important points help to answer this question:

1. First, think about what we are assessing when we speak of "institutional assessment." Institutional assessment is dependent upon the assessment of learning outcomes "because student learning is the heart of most college missions" (Suskie, 2018, p. 325).
2. Second, consider the most basic of distinctions between **assessment** and **evaluation**:
  - **Assessment** – measuring outcomes and using the results to make improvements.
  - **Evaluation** – examining the effectiveness of a process or program.

More completely stated, *evaluation* is defined as follows by some of the most respected authorities in the field:

- **Evaluation:** The systematic investigation of the quality of programs ... for purposes of decision making, judgments, conclusions, findings, new knowledge ... leading to improvement and/or accountability (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011, p. xxv).
- **Evaluation:** "The diligent investigation of a program's characteristics and merits.... The purpose of program evaluation is to provide information on the *effectiveness of programs, or interventions*, so as to *optimize the outcomes, efficiency, and quality*.... An evaluation may analyze a program's structure, activities, and organization as well as its political and social environment. It may also appraise the achievement of a program's goals and objectives and the extent of the program's impact and costs" (Fink, 2005, p. 3).
- **Evaluation:** "Evidence-gathering processes that are designed to examine program- or institution-level effectiveness. But the object of evaluation usually extends beyond learning outcomes to examine a much wider domain of institutional performance" (Ewell & Cumming, 2017, p. 25).

Keep referring back to this explanation of the difference between assessment and evaluation as you complete the units and work toward the creation of your course project, the Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan. Focus on assessment for your work in the upcoming units; in the final units, you will apply evaluation as it is defined in Suskie (2018), page 12.

### Resources

Bresciani, M. J. (2011, August). Making assessment meaningful: What new student affairs professionals and those new to assessment need to know (Assessment brief) [PDF]. Champaign, IL: National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. Retrieved from <http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/documents/ABStudentAffairs.pdf>

Ewell, P. T., & Cumming, T. (2017). History and conceptual basis of assessment in higher education. In T. Cumming & M. D. Miller (Eds.), *Enhancing assessment in higher education: Putting psychometrics to work* (pp. 6–31). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Fink, A. (2005). Program evaluation: A prelude. In *Evaluation fundamentals* (pp. 3–40). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. (n.d.). Degree qualifications profile. Retrieved from <http://degreeprofile.org/>

Suskie, L. (2018). *Assessing student learning: A common sense guide* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Yarbrough, D. B., Shulha, L. M., Hopson, R. K., & Caruthers, F. A. (2011). *The program evaluation standards: A guide for evaluators and evaluation users* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

#### Course Resources

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#### The Assessment and Evaluation Cycle

##### u01s3 - Learning Components

- Define the contemporary meaning of assessment.

##### u01d1 - Checking Assumptions about Assessment

In its broadest sense, assessment pertains to measuring some type of outcome with the intent of then using that data to make improvements and demonstrate accountability. Assessment in higher education (or adult education) typically pertains to assessing learning outcomes in particular, for being able to demonstrate that students are indeed learning what we say they are learning is the core of the purpose of higher education.

Reflect on how you answered the quiz questions. What did you notice as you answered them? Was the process of differentiating assessment from evaluation new for you? What is clearer, or what is still confusing? After reviewing the definitions of assessment and evaluation and after studying this unit's readings, has your understanding of assessment been confirmed or is it changing?

## Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your fellow learners and respond to two. In your response, compare the learner's reaction to the quiz to your own. Did the learner's analysis shed any light on your own understanding, or can you provide a tip that might help with his or her understanding of the distinction between assessment and evaluation?

#### Course Resources

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#### Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

##### u01d1 - Learning Components

- Examine strategies for assessing learning outcomes in programs, departments, and institutions.
- Develop communications appropriate for the audience.
- Apply knowledge of APA style for references and citations.

## Unit 2 >> Examining Obstacles to Assessment

### Introduction

Assessment of student learning has been a focus in higher education since its beginnings at the First National Conference on Assessment in Higher Education in 1985, co-sponsored by the National Institute of Education (NIE) and the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) (Ewell, 2002). Even though more than 30 years have passed, assessment is not always consistently and effectively practiced in institutions across the country. One possible obstacle is that it is sometimes still misunderstood, as you studied in Unit 1. In this unit, you will build on your understanding of assessment from Unit 1 by examining the stages of assessment. You will also begin studying the obstacles that contribute to the controversy surrounding assessment.

## Reference

Ewell, P. T. (2002). An emerging scholarship: A brief history of assessment. In T. W. Banta (Ed.), *Building a scholarship of assessment* (pp. 3–25). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

## Learning Activities

### u02s1 - Studies

## Readings

Use the Capella library and course files to read the following:

- Banta, T. W., & Blaich, C. (2011). Closing the assessment loop. *Change*, 43(1), 22–27.
- Kinzie, J. (2010). Perspectives from campus leaders on the current state of student learning outcomes assessment. *Assessment Update*, 22(5), 1–15.
- From Denial to Acceptance: The Stages of Assessment [PDF].
- Opening Doors to Faculty Involvement in Assessment [PDF].
  - This article examines the controversy of faculty involvement in assessment and proposes ways to develop collaborative efforts for successful assessment on campuses. As you read this important article, consider how it applies not only to faculty but also to staff members such as student services personnel and administrators.

### u02s1 - Learning Components

- Identify strategies for engaging faculty and staff in assessment efforts.
- Describe the issues contributing to the controversy around evolving assessment efforts.

### u02s2 - Assignment Preparation

Your first assignment is due next week. To prepare, read the assignment instructions and scoring guide to ensure that you understand the requirements. Then carefully study the readings in the units to support your arguments for learning assessments, obstacles to participation in assessment, and strategies for engaging faculty and staff in assessment.

### u02s3 - Selection of Institution

Many of the discussions and assignments in this course ask you to apply what you are learning to a particular college or university situation. You have the option of focusing your work in this course on the institution where you are currently employed or on an institution of your choosing. You might choose an institution that you attended as an undergraduate, one in your area that you are familiar with, or one that you can obtain information about through its website.

### u02d1 - An Initial Examination of Institutional Practices

## An Initial Examination of Institutional Practices

For this discussion, respond to both parts of these instructions:

- As you first did in Unit 1, consider once again the four steps of assessment as presented List 1.1, the Four-Step Teaching-Learning Assessment Process, in your *Assessing Student Learning* text. (You will use this definition throughout the course to guide the development of your course project—your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan.) Thinking about your institution or the one that you have selected to study for this



course (see the third study of Unit 2), apply each part of Suskie's (2018) description to what you see to be the current status of assessment efforts. Include an analysis of where it appears there are strengths, a need for improvement, or both, in the process of assessing student learning outcomes.

- Second, explain how the current status of assessment efforts compares to what you read in Kinzie's (2010) article, "Perspectives from Campus Leaders on the Current State of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment." Remember to provide citations from the readings for the information that you use in your post.

## Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your fellow learners and respond to two. In your response, point out any similarities in assessment efforts at your institutions. What differences do you see? To what do you attribute those differences? How well understood is the process of assessing student learning outcomes at your institution or the one that you have selected to study for this course (see the third study of Unit 2)?

Course Resources

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Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

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Assessing Student Learning

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Perspectives From campus Leaders on the Current State of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

u02d1 - Learning Components

- Examine strategies for assessing learning outcomes in programs, departments, and institutions.
- Define the contemporary meaning of assessment.
- Develop communications appropriate for the audience.
- Apply knowledge of APA style for references and citations.

### u02d2 - Examining Obstacles That Contribute to the Controversy

The readings for this unit explore what you might already know to exist at your institution or one that you will study for this course: There is much controversy over assessment. Basing your initial discussion post on the readings thus far in the course, how might you summarize some common obstacles to assessment? To what extent are these obstacles actual or perceived? Are any of them created by assumptions or inaccurate information? How would you summarize the controversy over assessment? Remember to provide citations from the readings for the information that you use in your post. *Please note:* In the next unit, you will examine possible solutions to the obstacles that you identify in this unit.

## Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your fellow learners and respond to two. Are there similarities in your statements? Do you see a difference in your analysis of whether the obstacles are actual or perceived or created by assumptions or inaccurate information? Do you have any recommendations for the learner?

Course Resources

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Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

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u02d2 - Learning Components

- Develop communications appropriate for the audience.
- Describe the issues contributing to the controversy around evolving assessment efforts.
- Apply knowledge of APA style for references and citations.

### Unit 3 >> Offering Solutions to Build Consensus

#### Introduction

In this unit, you will continue your study of the controversy surrounding assessment, but you will now focus on how obstacles to assessment can be and have been resolved. Consider how your learning in this unit will be useful for the plans for assessment that you will begin developing in the next unit.

## Learning Activities

### u03s1 - Studies

## Readings

Use *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide* to read the following:

- Chapter 14, "Valuing Assessment and the People Who Contribute," pages 175–186.

Use the Capella library and the Internet to read the following:

- American Association for Higher Education. (1996). *Nine principles of good practice for assessing student learning*. Retrieved from <https://www2.indstate.edu/assessment/docs/ninePrinciples.pdf>
- National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. (2018, April 16). *Why are we assessing?* Retrieved from <https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Viewpoint-Why-Are-We-Assessing.pdf>

### u03s1 - Learning Components

- Identify strategies for engaging faculty and staff in assessment efforts.
- Examine strategies for assessing learning outcomes in programs, departments, and institutions.

### u03a1 - Communicating the Purpose and Value of Assessment

## Introduction

For this assignment, you will apply what you have learned so far in the course about the misunderstanding of and the resulting resistance to assessment efforts. You will also propose known strategies for navigating the resistance to assessment, as presented in the readings. In this real-world, on-the-job, practical assignment, you will assume the role of a member of student services or an academic department or a program that serve students. Those who work in your academic department or program are expected to collaborate on implementing an assessment plan, but there has been some resistance. You will create two email messages:

1. The first to a supervisor who has asked you to look into the controversy regarding assessment.
2. The second to a colleague, a co-worker you have heard complain about "what the administration is expecting us to do now."

## Instructions

- Assuming the role of a member of a student services or an academic department or program, develop two e-mail messages as described below. These messages are to be concise and professional. In both e-mail messages, provide citations from the readings thus far in the course to support your position and provide a list of references from the readings that you use for this assignment. Be sure to apply the submission requirements described below. *Please note:* Remember that the definition of *assessment* provided in List 1.1, the Four-Step Teaching-Learning-Assessment Process, in your *Assessing Student Learning* text is to be used throughout the course to guide the development of your course project.
- Your first e-mail message is to the head of the department, your direct supervisor, who is aware that there has been some resistance to assessment among those working in your academic department or program. Your supervisor has asked you to report on what assessment is, what common obstacles to involvement exist, and how your department can engage faculty or staff members in assessment efforts.
- The second e-mail message is to be directed to a fellow member of your department or program, one whom you have heard complain about "what the administration is expecting us to do now." In this more informal e-mail message, persuade your colleague of the value of assessment and the reasons they should be involved.

## Submission Requirements

Your submission should meet the following requirements:

- **Written communication:** Written communication is free of errors that detract from the overall message.
- **Resources:** Support ideas, claims, and concepts with evidence from scholarly literature.
- **APA formatting:** Resources and citations are formatted according to current APA style and formatting.
- **Length:** 1–1.5 pages for each e-mail message (for a total of 2–3 pages), single-spaced, excluding references page.

## Assessing Student Learning

### u03d1 - Examining Strategies to Work Toward Consensus

Reflect on the common obstacles to assessment that you examined in Unit 2. Using and citing the readings thus far in the course, how might you summarize some effective strategies for resolving those obstacles? How might a renewed understanding of assessment help faculty, staff, or administrators to become involved in assessment efforts and work toward consensus? Provide citations from the readings for the information that you use in your post.

## Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your fellow learners and respond to two. In your response, point out any similarities in your responses. Would his or her proposed strategies be applicable for working toward consensus and advancing assessment at your institution? What additional strategies might you recommend to the learner?

### Course Resources

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#### Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

### u03d1 - Learning Components

- Identify strategies for engaging faculty and staff in assessment efforts.
- Develop communications appropriate for the audience.
- Describe the issues contributing to the controversy around evolving assessment efforts.
- Apply knowledge of APA style for references and citations.

## Unit 4 >> Components of Effective Assessment: Learning Goals and Ways to Measure Achievement

### Introduction

In this unit, you will begin designing your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning course project. The first step in designing assessment is to begin at the end—that is, by stating **what students will know and be able to do** by the end of a learning experience. This first step is accepted practice in higher education, as leading experts in assessment have reported: “Stated learning outcomes are now the norm. Clearly articulated learning goals are important in determining whether students know and can do what an institution promises and what employers and policy makers expect” (Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014, p. 4). Equally important is to keep in mind that we cannot “assess what cannot be taught” (Suskie, 2018, p. 275). The posts that you develop for this unit’s discussions will serve as the rough drafts of the first two components of your plan: the learning goals that students or trainees are to achieve and the presentation of appropriate measures to assess their achievement of those goals following a learning experience, whether at the course, program, department, or institutional level.

### References

Kuh, G. D., Jankowski, N., Ikenberry, S. O., & Kinzie, J. (2014, January). Knowing what students know and can do: The current state of student learning outcomes assessment in U.S. colleges and universities [PDF]. *Abridged Report of the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment 2013 National Survey of Provosts*.

Suskie, L. *Assessing student learning: A common sense guide* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

### Learning Activities

### u04s1 - Studies

## Readings

Use [\*Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide\*](#) to read the following:

- Chapter 4, "Learning Goals: Articulating What You Most Want Students to Learn," pages 39–62.

- Pay particular attention to how you will apply “Characteristics of effective learning goals,” pages 46–48 (note how to avoid “fuzzy terms”). Note how this chapter refers to Bloom’s Taxonomy (page 52), which is provided in the resources and is to be used for developing your own learning goals in this course. Note also how the chapter includes tips for creating program goals (page 55) and institutional goals (pages 56–57).
- Chapter 16, “Creating Effective Assignments,” pages 205–214.
  - In this chapter, you will begin to consider the most effective means of determining how to measure students’ achievement of the learning goals.

Briefly scan the following chapters. For the second discussion in this unit, you will determine which of these chapters to read in detail to inform your discussion, which will become an important part of your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan.

- Chapter 15, “Designing Rubrics to Plan and Assess Assignments,” pages 189–204.
- Chapter 17, “Writing Multiple-Choice and Other Objective Tests,” pages 215–234.
- Chapter 18, “Assembling Evidence of Student Learning Into Portfolios,” pages 235–244.
- Chapter 20, “Other Assessment Tools,” pages 259–272.
- Chapter 21, “Assessing the Hard-to-Assess,” pages 273–284.

Use the Internet to read the following:

- Suskie, L. (2018, May 27). [What are the characteristics of well-stated learning goals? \[Blog post\]](http://www.lindasuskie.com/apps/blog/show/45689916-what-are-the-characteristics-of-well-stated-learning-goals-). Retrieved from <http://www.lindasuskie.com/apps/blog/show/45689916-what-are-the-characteristics-of-well-stated-learning-goals->

## Multimedia

Complete the following Capella multimedia presentation:

- [Interview with Natasha Jankowski, NILOA](#).
  - In this interview, Dr. Natasha Jankowski, Director of the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), discusses the importance of effective assessment for the purposes of institutional accreditation.

### Course Resources

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#### Bloom's Taxonomy Action Verbs

#### u04s1 - Learning Components

- Examine strategies for assessing learning outcomes in programs, departments, and institutions.
- Apply assessment strategies for student learning.

#### u04s2 - Learning Goal Tutorial

At the end of this tutorial, click on the link to begin your Unit 4 quiz on Learning Goal Statements.

#### *Why does assessment seem to be such a challenge?*

You have examined some reasons—and solutions—in the early units of the course to begin answering this question. Another reason is equally important; as Linda Suskie, the author of your *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide* text, pointed out, “The root cause of assessment struggles is often poorly articulated learning goals” (2018, p. 64). Another way of looking at the problem is this: We cannot assess accurately whether students or trainees have achieved the learning goals **if we have not stated clearly what those goals are**. And that is a common problem in higher education. We must start with creating statements of learning goals. The learning goals—the knowledge, skills, or abilities that students or trainees acquire as a result of a learning experience, such as a course, program, activity, or field experience—are what will be assessed, as explained in this unit’s readings.

Start with creating **observable, measurable, clearly stated outcomes** of the knowledge, skills, or abilities that students or trainees will be expected to demonstrate by the end of a course, a program, or an experience. Study the following examples, noting the structure and wording commonly used for creating learning goals. Be ready to apply the structure and wording to the learning goals that you will begin developing in this unit for your own Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan.

Here are three examples of **appropriate** learning goals:

1. Students *will demonstrate the ability to analyze* the characteristics of professional behavior.
  - Note the italicized words. They are commonly used for such statements, but do we really need to include “demonstrate the ability to”? Consider whether the outcome will be the same if we state, “Students will be able to analyze the characteristics of professional behavior.”
2. Students *will be able to identify* the purpose of strategic planning for an organization.

- Note the italicized words again. You might decide that you don't really need "be able to" and just state:
  - Students *will identify* the purpose of strategic planning for an organization.

3. Career services trainees *will design* interview questions for client mock interviews.

Now study the difference between appropriate and not-so-appropriate learning goals statements below. Note that many poorly stated goals fall into one of **three categories of errors**:

1. Writing outcomes that are **not clear or cannot be measured or observed**. See the description of "fuzzy terms" on pages 47–48 in your *Assessing Student Learning: A Commonsense Guide* text:
  - Students will demonstrate their understanding of the scientific method.
  - Students will be able to understand the purpose of strategic planning for an organization.
  - Students will learn about ...
  - Students will become familiar with ...
  - Students will demonstrate their knowledge of ...
  - Students will gain an understanding of ...
2. **Describing** an activity or learning experience. See "Describe outcomes, not learning content, products, or activities" on page 48 in *Assessing Student Learning: A Commonsense Guide*:
  - Students will write a 10-page research paper.
  - Students will attend tutoring services at least once weekly.
  - Students will participate actively in group discussions.
  - Students will give three presentations on genres of music from different historical periods.
3. Describing what will be done for students, **not what they will do** to demonstrate what they know and can do. It is tempting to focus on what we do for students, rather than on what the students will demonstrate that they know and can do as a result of what we have done for them. In each of the following statements, consider who is really doing an action:
  - Students will be given instruction in basic grammar and writing skills.
  - Students will be provided with a map of the campus to locate student services offices.
  - Students will be empowered to take a leadership role in a campus organization.

Using your knowledge of effectively stated learning goals from the assigned readings and this tutorial, continue to your quiz on Learning Goal Statements.

#### u04s2 - Learning Components

- Apply assessment strategies for student learning.

#### u04q1 - Quiz: Learning Goal Statements

Complete this quiz to test your skills in identifying effectively worded learning goal statements. Use the readings and the tutorial provided in this unit to select the correct responses. You will then use your knowledge to design your own learning goal statements. The quiz consists of 10 questions and is worth 10 percent of your course grade.

- You may take the quiz one time.
- It is recommended that you access and take the quiz in this unit.
- There is no time limit on the quiz.
- After you have answered the questions, submit your quiz to receive credit. The quiz is scored automatically, and you will receive feedback immediately.

Click the linked quiz title to access the quiz. If you have any issues with the quiz, contact your instructor.

#### u04d1 - Creating Effective Learning Goal Statements

After reading Chapter 4 of your *Assessing Student Learning* text and completing this unit's tutorial and quiz, use Bloom's Taxonomy (linked in the Resources) to develop 3–5 learning goals that you expect your current or future students (or trainees) to be able to achieve as a result of a learning experience, such as a course, program, activity, or field experience.

First, write a brief paragraph that summarizes the course, program, activity, or experience in which students or trainees will engage in learning. Then, using the structure and wording used for stating learning goals, as presented in the tutorial, post 3–5 carefully constructed learning goals that students will be expected to achieve as a result of their learning experience. Keep in mind that each goal must be observable, measurable, and clearly stated. Be sure to use the action verbs presented in Bloom's Taxonomy and avoid "fuzzy terms" (Suskie, 2018, pp. 47–48). Using and citing the readings for this unit, present a rationale for the specific learning goals that you develop using and citing the readings for this unit.

These goal statements will be the first component of your course project, your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan, that you will be developing throughout the remaining units.

## Response Guidelines

Respond to the posts of at least two other learners. Assume the role of a student or trainee for whom these goals are proposed. From the perspective of the person who will be expected to demonstrate achievement of the learning, share your perceptions of how clear the learning goals seem to you. Are they observable, measurable, and clearly stated? Do you have recommendations for how any of the statements might be improved?

Once you have your own responses from the student perspective, consider continuing that dialogue until the student can state that the goals are clear to him or her.

### Reference

Suskie, L. (2018). *Assessing student learning: A common sense guide* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

### Course Resources

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Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

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Bloom's Taxonomy Action Verbs

### u04d1 - Learning Components

- Apply assessment strategies for student learning.
- Develop communications appropriate for the audience.
- Apply knowledge of APA style for references and citations.

### u04d2 - Measuring Achievement of Learning Goals

After reading Chapter 16 and scanning Chapters 15, 17, 18, 20, and 21, select 2–3 of those chapters to study in greater detail, basing your decision on their applicability to your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan.

Present an overview and descriptions of each of the measures you propose to assess the students' or trainees' achievement of the learning goals in the first discussion of this unit. Using the readings and applying critical thinking, explain how each proposed assessment measure is appropriate for enabling the students to demonstrate achievement of those goals.

## Response Guidelines

Respond to the posts of at least two other learners. Once again, assume the role of a student or trainee for whom these goals are proposed. From the perspective of the person expected to demonstrate achievement of the learning, share your perceptions of how appropriate the assessment measures seem to you. How well do you think these measures align with the learning goals that you—as the student—are to achieve? Do you have any suggestions for the learner?

### Course Resources

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Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

### u04d2 - Learning Components

- Apply assessment strategies for student learning.
- Develop communications appropriate for the audience.
- Apply knowledge of APA style for references and citations.
- Synthesize findings and how they could be used to inform assessment planning and decision making.

## Unit 5 >> Components of Effective Assessment: Standards and Stakeholders

### Introduction

In this unit, you will continue to build the Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan that you started in Unit 4. You have designed the drafts of your learning goal statements and explained the means to be used to measure students' or trainees' achievement of those goals. Next, your plan will present an explanation of the standards, benchmarks, or targets that will be used to determine what constitutes successful achievement, as presented in the readings for this unit. Also in this unit, you will create a draft of the next component of your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan: a description of the stakeholders. The stakeholders are those individuals or groups involved in some way in the assessment, whether they contribute to the planning and development or implementation of the assessment effort or whether they will only be informed of the results.

### Learning Activities

#### u05s1 - Studies

### Readings

Use *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide* to read the following:

- Chapter 3, "What Are Effective Assessment Practices?," pages 23–36.
  - In this chapter, note the overview of essential practices for assessment efforts to be effective and meaningful. Pay particular attention to List 3.2, Steps to Ensure that Evidence of Student Learning Is Useful and Used (p. 25).
- Chapter 22, "Setting Meaningful Standards and Targets," pages 287–304.
  - Consider how you will use this information to establish "a clear definition of what constitutes successful outcomes" (p. 288). In addition, study Exhibit 10.2, A Template for an Annual Program Assessment Report, on page 136 of *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Approach*. Consider how you will address the categories of the template for your own assessment plan, particularly the fifth column.

Use the Internet to read the following articles. They provide valuable information regarding benchmarks or standards and stakeholders.

- Suskie, L. (2014, March 17). [What is good assessment? A second look \[PDF\]](http://www.lindasuskie.com/apps/blog/show/41934533-what-is-good-assessment-a-second-look). Retrieved from <http://www.lindasuskie.com/apps/blog/show/41934533-what-is-good-assessment-a-second-look>
- Suskie, L. (2015, March 23). [Setting meaningful benchmarks or standards \[Blog post\]](http://www.lindasuskie.com/apps/blog/show/43191428-setting-meaningful-benchmarks-or-standards). Retrieved from <http://www.lindasuskie.com/apps/blog/show/43191428-setting-meaningful-benchmarks-or-standards>
- Braskamp, L. A., & Engberg, M. E. (2014). [Guidelines for judging the effectiveness of assessing student learning \[PDF\]](http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/documents/BraskampGuidelines.pdf). Retrieved from <http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/documents/BraskampGuidelines.pdf>

#### u05s1 - Learning Components

- Examine strategies for assessing learning outcomes in programs, departments, and institutions.
- Apply assessment strategies for student learning.

#### u05s2 - Assignment Preparation

In the Unit 6 assignment, you will submit the first components of your final course project, your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan and/or your Rationale Paper. You will draft those components using the content of your discussions from Units 4, 5, and 6, using content from previous discussions as they might apply. To prepare for your Unit 6 assignment, select the program, course, department, or experience that you will focus on. Then develop your proposed learning goals. Make sure to evaluate the quality of your goals to ensure they are measurable, and describe outcomes rather than activities or experiences. Research scholarly literature supporting your choice of learning goals.

#### u05d1 - Applying Benchmarks or Standards to Assessment

After reading Chapter 22 of your *Assessing Student Learning* text and the blog post entitled “Setting Meaningful Benchmarks or Standards,” consider the benchmarks, standards, or targets that are most logically suited to establish “a clear definition of what constitutes successful outcomes” for your own plan to assess learning (Suskie, 2018, p. 288). As you do, remember the purpose of assessment: to interpret and use the results of the assessment effectively and appropriately to promote improvement and accountability. Construct a draft of the component of your course project in which you identify appropriate standards for your assessment effort. Explain why they are appropriate and how they are to be applied.

You will determine for the Unit 6 assignment which information is to appear in your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan and which statements are to appear in the Rationale Paper that explains your choices.

## Response Guidelines

Respond to the posts of at least two other learners. Assume the role of a colleague or other stakeholder who is supporting the learner’s efforts to propose a plan for assessment. From the perspective of that person, share your perceptions of how appropriate the proposed standards seem to you. Are the reasons clearly stated? Do you have suggestions for additional rationale for the learner’s proposed standards?

Course Resources

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Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

### u05d1 - Learning Components

- Examine strategies for assessing learning outcomes in programs, departments, and institutions.
- Develop communications appropriate for the audience.
- Apply knowledge of APA style for references and citations.
- Synthesize findings and how they could be used to inform assessment planning and decision making.

### u05d2 - Involving Stakeholders

After reading Chapter 3 of your *Assessing Student Learning* text, the blog entitled “What is Good Assessment? A Second Look,” and the article entitled “Guidelines for Judging the Effectiveness of Assessing Student Learning,” consider the stakeholders to be involved in your plan to assess student learning. Identify both internal and external stakeholders, including your institution’s accrediting organization, and explain the roles of the stakeholders in your assessment planning. *Please note:* Include only information that pertains to stakeholders’ involvement in assessment, not to the program, department, or institution in general.

You will determine for the Unit 6 assignment which information is to appear in your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan and which statements are to appear in the Rationale Paper that explains your choices.

## Response Guidelines

Respond to the posts of at least two other learners. Write a brief response that confirms or poses questions about the learner’s choice of stakeholders and their roles in assessment. If you see that the description extends beyond the scope of assessment efforts only, consider alerting the learner.

Course Resources

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Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

### u05d2 - Learning Components

- Identify strategies for engaging faculty and staff in assessment efforts.
- Develop communications appropriate for the audience.
- Apply knowledge of APA style for references and citations.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of strategies for different stakeholder groups.

## Unit 6 >> Components of Effective Assessment: Action Plan

### Introduction



You will continue developing your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan in this unit. The component that you will now design, the action plan that presents the steps to be used to plan for and implement the assessment effort, will immediately follow the components that you have already developed. Compiling the components you have developed thus far, you will revise them as needed to be scholarly and professional, and then you will submit them as your Unit 6 assignment.

## Learning Activities

### u06s1 - Studies

## Readings

Use *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide* to read the following chapters. They provide an abundance of suggestions and proven strategies that you can consider for your own *Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan* as you propose a step-by-step action plan to develop the plan before its implementation.

- Chapter 10, "Helping Everyone Learn What to Do," pages 127–138.
- Chapter 11, "Supporting Assessment Efforts," pages 139–148.
- Chapter 12, "Keeping Assessment Cost-Effective," pages 149–164.

## Multimedia

View [The Assessment and Evaluation Cycle](#) diagram.

### u06a1 - Learning Goals, Assessment Instruments, and Standards

## Introduction

For this assignment, you will begin constructing your course project, the Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan. Your project will not be just a paper about assessment, but a real-world, on-the-job, practical plan that you are encouraged to propose for implementation either in your current position or in the future.

First, keeping in mind that you will be proposing this plan to decision-makers who will consider whether to implement your plan, you will develop an introduction that concisely summarizes the program, course, department, or experience that you have selected for your course project. The introduction will also describe how you propose to apply the cycle of assessment to your plan to assess the learning outcomes of students or trainees in a specific learning situation.

Then you will present the first three sections of the actual proposed assessment plan:

1. The learning goals that students are to achieve.
2. The means of measuring their achievement of the goals.
3. The standards and/or targets to define successful achievement.

Each of these sections will be followed by an explanation of the reasons—your rationale—for the decisions you made for the sections of the proposed plan. Your explanations must be well supported by the required course readings, because when we develop assessment, we establish our credibility by using and citing authoritative sources.

## Instructions

Construct the following components of your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan to assess the learning outcomes of students or trainees in a specific learning situation and the rationale for the decisions you make for each of the components. Use and cite the readings to support your claims in the rationale sections. Provide a list of references from the readings that you use. Be sure to apply the submission requirements described below.

First, write a concise summary of the program, course, department, or experience that you have selected, keeping in mind how much information the decision-maker to whom you will present your proposed plan needs. In addition, describe how the cycle of assessment will be applied to the proposed plan.

Under the heading "Learning Goals," present the learning goals that the students or trainees are to achieve. Then, under the sub-heading "Rationale for Learning Goals," present a rationale for your goals, using and citing the readings.

Under the next heading, "Assessment Instruments," present the types of assessment instruments (the means of measuring the outcomes of the assessment) that the students or trainees will complete. Then, under the sub-heading "Rationale for Assessment Instruments," present a rationale for the assessment instruments, explaining how using those instruments are appropriate to measure achievement of the learning goals and using and citing the readings.

Under the final heading, which might be "Setting Standards," "Setting Benchmarks," "Setting Targets," or some combination of these or similar terms, present your recommendations for interpreting the results of the assessment. Then, under the sub-heading "Rationale for Setting Standards" (or whichever term you selected), present a rationale for your decisions, using and citing the readings.

Do not add a conclusion, for the remaining components of your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan will follow these components.

## Submission Requirements

Your submission should meet the following requirements:

- **Written communication:** Written communication is free of errors that detract from the overall message.
- **APA formatting:** Paper, resources, and citations are formatted according to current APA style and formatting.
- **Length:** 4–7 pages, double-spaced with headings and sub-headings.
- **Font and font size:** Times New Roman, 12 points.

Course Resources

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[APA Style and Formatting](#)

### u06d1 - Creating an Action Plan for the Development and Implementation of Assessment

Using the assigned readings, think about the steps needed to prepare for and develop an assessment plan before its actual implementation. Without thoughtfully considering and applying appropriate action steps, those who oversee assessment might risk creating an effort that is unsustainable. To ensure that your assessment plan leaves little to chance, propose a set of steps for the development and implementation of your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan, using and citing the assigned readings in Unit 6 (Chapters 10, 11, and 12). List those steps and briefly explain how they apply to your plan. Together with action steps that you design yourself to supplement the steps from the readings, you will propose a total of approximately 7–10 action steps.

*Tip:* An efficient way to create an action plan is to do an overview of the chapters, noting the headings and subheadings. Select the headings that apply to your assessment effort and use them to write your action steps. Next, think about additional steps that you know will be needed for your specific assessment effort; add action steps that you design yourself, if needed. You might want to use bullet points or a list format instead of fully developed paragraphs.

Your initial discussion will form the basis of part of your Unit 6 assignment. Later, you will have the opportunity to revise this action plan to become a component of your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan and/or your Rationale Paper.

## Response Guidelines

Respond to the posts of at least two other learners. Assume the role of a colleague or other stakeholder who is supporting the learner's efforts to propose a plan for assessment. From the perspective of that person, share your perceptions of how practical the action plan seems to you. Are the steps clearly stated? Do you have recommendations for any additions or deletions to the action plan?

Course Resources

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Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

### u06d1 - Learning Components

- Examine strategies for assessing learning outcomes in programs, departments, and institutions.
- Develop communications appropriate for the audience.
- Apply knowledge of APA style for references and citations.

## Unit 7 >> Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation: From Assessment to Evaluation

### Introduction

In this unit, we shift from a focus on assessing student learning to a focus on evaluating students' or trainees' achievement of those learning outcomes, that is, to making judgments about the results. This stage in the cycle of assessment is often called "closing the loop." To begin the transition from assessing learning to evaluating the results of assessment, consider the purposes that drive assessment in the first place: improvement and accountability. *Institutional effectiveness*, a common phrase in higher education, can be accomplished only if the institution is achieving the purpose for which it exists. Accreditation is in place to ensure that institutions are demonstrating accountability by documenting evidence that they are achieving their purpose. Assessment of learning outcomes is essential to both purposes. What you learn in this unit will apply to the final components of your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan.

### Learning Activities

#### u07s1 - Studies

### Readings

Use [\*Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide\*](#) to read the following:

- Chapter 6, "How Will Your Evidence of Student Learning be Used?," pages 85–92.

Use the Capella library, the Internet, and your course files to read the following:

- Ewell, P. T., & Jankowski, N. A. (2015). *Accreditation as opportunity: Serving two purposes with assessment*. In Kuh, G. D., Ikenberry, S. O., Jankowski, N., Cain, T. R., Ewell, P. H., & Kinzie, J. *Using evidence of student learning to improve higher education* (pp. 146–159). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Suskie, L. (2014, February 7). [What is institutional effectiveness? \[Blog post\]](http://www.lindasuskie.com/apps/blog/show/41357706-what-is-institutional-effectiveness-). Retrieved from <http://www.lindasuskie.com/apps/blog/show/41357706-what-is-institutional-effectiveness->
- Provezis, S. (2010). *Regional accreditation and student learning outcomes: Mapping the territory*. *National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment*. Retrieved from <http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/documents/Provezis.pdf>

### Multimedia

Complete the following Capella multimedia presentation:

- [Interview with Natasha Jankowski, NILOA](#).
  - In this interview, Dr. Natasha Jankowski, Director of the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), discusses the importance of effective assessment for the purposes of institutional accreditation.

#### u07s1 - Learning Components

- Apply assessment strategies for student learning.

#### u07s2 - Assignment Preparation

The next part of your project is due next week. To prepare, read the assignment instructions and scoring guide to ensure you understand the requirements for the assignment. Then begin work by identifying the stakeholders in your proposed project and defining the rationale for their inclusion.

#### u07d1 - The Role of Assessment in Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation

### Introduction

**Institutional Effectiveness:** A trend that continues to be a primary focus in higher education is *institutional effectiveness*. While that term seems to have an obvious meaning, what constitutes effectiveness is sometimes debated. To judge institutional effectiveness, we must conduct what is often called

*institutional assessment*, that is, evaluation of the effectiveness of the institution (recall the Discovering Assessment and Evaluation quiz in Unit 1). It is important to keep in mind, as Suskie (2018) stated, that “because student learning is the heart of most college missions, the assessment of student learning is a major component of institutional assessment” (p. 325).

**Accreditation:** If you have already been involved in accreditation efforts, you know how important accreditation is and how apprehensive faculty, staff, and administrators can become when preparing for an accreditation visit. (If you have not yet participated in accreditation efforts, you are very likely to be in the future.) Assessment of students’ learning outcomes is a critical element of an institution’s demonstration of what accreditation reviewers are investigating—whether and to what extent an institution is fulfilling its purpose.

## Instructions

For this discussion, you will begin to draft the beginning of the final section of your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan, entitled “Closing the Loop.” Reflect on how your plan to assess learning outcomes connects to the larger context of the effectiveness of the program, department, or institution under which such assessment falls. Explain that connection in your initial post. How might the assessment efforts that you are proposing pertain to accreditation, either directly or indirectly? Use and cite the readings and the interview with Dr. Natasha Jankowski for this unit to support your argument.

This discussion will contribute to the component of your course project in which you “close the loop.” You will determine for the final course project which information is to appear in your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan and which is to appear in the Rationale Paper that explains your decisions.

## Response Guidelines

Respond to the posts of at least two other learners. Does the learner’s explanation of the connection between his or her proposed assessment effort and the larger context of the program, department, or institution seem logical to you? Is it clear how the assessment efforts might pertain to accreditation efforts? Recommend any sources that you see as appropriate for supporting the explanations of these connections.

Course Resources

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Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

u07d1 - Learning Components

- Examine strategies for assessing learning outcomes in programs, departments, and institutions.
- Apply assessment strategies for student learning.
- Develop communications appropriate for the audience.
- Apply knowledge of APA style for references and citations.

## Unit 8 >> Components of Effective Assessment: Using Results for Improvement

### Introduction

Together with what you developed in Unit 7, you will bring your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan to a logical, practical conclusion by developing the very important final components, those that “close the loop” for your plan to assess and evaluate student learning outcomes. In this unit, you will recommend ways to use the results of assessment to make improvements.

### Learning Activities

u08s1 - Studies

## Readings

Use [\*Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide\*](#) to review the following:

- Chapter 6, “How Will Your Evidence of Student Learning Be Used?,” pages 85–92.

Use the Internet to read the following:

- National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. (2018, April 16). [Why are we assessing? \[Blog post\]](https://blogs.illinois.edu/view/915/639769). Retrieved from <https://blogs.illinois.edu/view/915/639769>
  - You first read this in Unit 3; review it for this unit, focusing on strategies for making improvements and enhancing accountability.

- Hutchings, P., Ewell, P., & Banta, T. (2012). AAHE principles of good practice: Aging nicely. Retrieved from <http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/PrinciplesofAssessment.html>
  - You first read the principles in Unit 3; read the letter by three of the leading authorities in the field of assessment and review the principles, reflecting upon their relevance for current assessment efforts.
- Rogers, M. (2017, Fall). The journey of improvement: How an institution enhanced the quality of their assessment process [PDF]. *Intersection*, 22–25. Retrieved from [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.aalhe.org/resource/resmgr/docs/Int/AAHLE\\_Fall\\_2017\\_Intersection.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.aalhe.org/resource/resmgr/docs/Int/AAHLE_Fall_2017_Intersection.pdf)
  - This brief article presents an example of how one institution made improvements by focusing on the assessment process itself. Note in particular how students' learning goal statements were revised to become clearer, measurable, and attainable.

#### u08s1 - Learning Components

- Apply assessment strategies for student learning.

#### u08a1 - Stakeholders and Action Plan to Prepare for Assessment

### Introduction

For this assignment, you will continue constructing your course project, the Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan. Your project will not be just a paper about assessment, but a real-world, on-the-job, practical plan that you are encouraged to propose for implementation either in your current position or in the future.

Still keeping in mind that you will be proposing this plan to a decision-maker who will consider whether to implement your plan, you will develop three additional components of your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan:

1. The components that describes the stakeholders and their roles in the assessment effort.
2. The action plan needed for effective implementation of the assessment effort.
3. The introduction to the final component of your plan, "Closing the Loop," in which you will explain how your plan to assess learning outcomes connects to the larger context of the effectiveness of the program, department, or institution under which such assessment falls.

Each of these sections will be followed by an explanation of the reasons—your rationale—for the decisions you made for the sections of the proposed plan. Your explanations must be well supported by the required course readings, because when we develop assessment, we establish our credibility by using and citing authoritative sources.

### Instructions

**Please note:** The components that you design for this assignment immediately follow the components you created in Unit 6. Therefore, do not write an introduction.

Construct the following components of your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan to assess the learning outcomes of students or trainees in a specific learning situation and the rationale for the decisions you make for each of the components. Use and cite the readings to support your claims in the rationale sections. Provide a list of references from the readings that you use. Be sure to apply the submission requirements described below.

Under the heading "Stakeholders," briefly identify both the internal and external stakeholders and briefly describe their roles in the assessment effort. Then, under the sub-heading "Rationale for Stakeholders," present a rationale for the inclusion of the stakeholders, using and citing the readings as appropriate.

Under the next heading, "Action Plan to Guide Implementation," briefly describe the steps that are needed to plan and develop the assessment effort before its actual implementation. Then, under the sub-heading "Rationale for Action Plan," present a rationale for the steps you are recommending, using and citing the readings.

Under the final heading for this assignment, "Closing the Loop," explain how your plan to assess learning outcomes is intended to connect to the larger context of the effectiveness of the program, department, or institution. Explain how your proposed assessment efforts are intended to pertain to accreditation, either directly or indirectly. (It is essential that you use the readings for this section; do not make assumptions that cannot be supported by credible sources. In the rare cases where accreditation does not apply, this content will be omitted.) Then, under the sub-heading "Rationale for Closing the Loop," present a rationale for your decisions, using and citing the readings.

Do not add a conclusion, for the "Closing the Loop" component of your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan will be further developed in the next units.

### Submission Requirements

Your submission should meet the following requirements:

- **Written communication:** Written communication is free of errors that detract from the overall message.
- **APA formatting:** Paper, resources, and citations are formatted according to current APA style and formatting.
- **Length:** 3–6 pages, double-spaced with headings and sub-headings.

Course Resources

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[APA Style and Formatting](#)

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[Faculty Expectations](#)

## u08d1 - Using the Results of Assessment

As you have studied throughout the course, the purpose of assessment is to improve the teaching and learning process and to establish accountability, that is, to provide evidence that we are accomplishing what we claim to be accomplishing—educating students (or trainees). In Unit 7, you were introduced to the process of evaluation of that data in order to use “assessment information to make an informed judgment” (Suskie, 2018, p. 12). Using and citing the readings in these two units, what strategies will you propose in your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan? Limit your recommendations to 5–7 strategies. Distinguish whether the strategies you propose address one or more of the following:

1. Improvements to the assessment process itself (including the appropriateness of the learning goal statements).
2. Improvements to the teaching, learning, or training process. (Use caution here; just one set of assessment data is not necessarily sufficient to determine what changes might be appropriate.)
3. Improvements to the action plan of strategies to develop the assessment effort before or during its implementation (recall your work in Unit 6).
4. Improvements to involving stakeholders more effectively.
5. Improvements to the means of interpreting and using the assessment data.
6. Other factors that you see as important for improvement and accountability.

Provide citations from the readings for the information that you use in your post. Your discussion will contribute to the component of your course project in which you propose strategies to use the results of the assessment to create improvements and to build a culture of assessment. *Tip:* You might want to use bullet points or a list format for some or all of this component instead of fully developed paragraphs.

You will determine for the final course project which information is to appear in your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan and which is to appear in the Rationale Paper.

## Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your fellow learners and respond to two. Are you and the learner focusing on the same approaches to improvement? Would his or her proposed strategies be applicable for your own Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan? What additional strategies might you recommend to the learner? In addition, consider making recommendations about how this information might be effectively presented. Would any parts of it be appropriate as bulleted lists, tables, charts, or other figures?

Course Resources

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[Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide](#)

## u08d1 - Learning Components

- Apply assessment strategies for student learning.
- Develop communications appropriate for the audience.
- Apply knowledge of APA style for references and citations.
- Synthesize findings and how they could be used to inform assessment planning and decision making.

## Unit 9 >> Completing the Assessment and Evaluation Plan

### Introduction

In this final unit dedicated to guiding the construction of your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan, you will examine strategies for generating improvement and accountability for your program, department, or institution, and recommend those strategies in your "Closing the Loop" component. You will conclude your plan by using these and any strategies from Units 7 and 8 to develop the conclusion of your plan, in which you propose strategies to build a culture of assessment.

## Learning Activities

### u09s1 - Studies

## Readings

Read the resource below:

- National Institute of Learning Outcomes Assessment. (2018). *Assessment that matters: Trending towards practices that document authentic student learning* [PDF].
  - The report presents the findings of the third national survey on assessment, particularly "assessment methods, uses, drivers of assessment practice, availability of assessment information ... [and] initiatives to improve student learning" (p. 6). The "Executive Summary" (pages 3–5) highlights the major findings. Beyond those highlights, the section entitled "The Current State of Institutional Assessment of Learning" (pages 7–25) presents informative detail about the ten major findings. The section entitled "Implications" (pages 24–27) suggests recommendations for application of the findings.

### u09s1 - Learning Components

- Apply assessment strategies for student learning.

### u09s2 - Assignment Preparation

Your final assignment for this course includes a PowerPoint presentation. To prepare for this, view the following resources:

- Guidelines for Effective PowerPoint Presentations [PPT].
- PowerPoint Presentations Library Guide.

You have the option of recording your presentation using Kaltura. If you choose this option, you may want to review the Capella Campus resources for using this tool:

- Using Kaltura.

### u09s2 - Learning Components

- Develop communications appropriate for the audience.

### u09d1 - Making Recommendations Based on Documented Advances in the Assessment Movement

Reflect upon your study of the *Assessment That Matters* text. The section entitled "The Current State of Institutional Assessment of Learning" (pages 7–25) presents details about the ten major findings. Select 2–3 that most closely apply to your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan and explain how they relate to your plan. Next, discuss which implications determined from the findings, as presented on pages 24–27, can be used to inform ways to generate improvement and accountability for your program, department, or institution. You will incorporate this discussion into the conclusion of your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan presentation and the Rationale Paper.

## Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your fellow learners and respond to two. In your response, share what has been most informative about the learner's ideas as presented in their post and your reaction to their recommendations.

u09d1 - Learning Components

- Apply assessment strategies for student learning.
- Develop communications appropriate for the audience.
- Apply knowledge of APA style for references and citations.
- Communicate the value of assessment in an appropriate and effective manner.

**u09d2 - Peer Review of “Closing the Loop” Sections**

Upon completing this unit's first discussion, you have now completed drafts of all the content for the two parts of your final course project, both the Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan presentation and the Rationale Paper that supports your reasoning for the decisions you made in the development of your plan. For this discussion, post the draft of your “Closing the Loop” sections of your PowerPoint presentation, organizing the sections in this order:

- Strategies to disseminate the results of the assessment.
- Strategies to use the results of the assessment to create improvements.
- Strategies to build a culture of assessment.

**Keep in mind that your presentation will be to the specific audience that you have already determined.** Post your draft of the PowerPoint slides for this section and include talking points in the notes beneath those slides. Be sure to apply correct formatting for a PowerPoint presentation, as shown in the media for this unit. Limit the number of slides to 2–4.

## Response Guidelines

Review the slides and talking points in the posts of your fellow learners and respond to two. Assume the role of a person attending that learner's presentation. How clear and perhaps how compelling is the content of the presentation for using the results of assessment to make improvements and advance accountability for that learner's program, department, or institution? Do you have any questions for the learner?

Course Resources

## Unit 10 >> Continuing the Cycle of Assessment and Evaluation

### Introduction

As you conclude this foundational course on assessment and evaluation of learning in higher education, consider how you will continue to use your new knowledge, either in a current or a future position. Those who know and can do assessment are in demand, for assessment is essential for improvement and accountability in higher education.

### Learning Activities

**u10s1 - Studies**

## Readings

Use [Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide](#) text to read the following chapters. They provide an abundance of suggestions and proven strategies to add to the knowledge you now have, not only to implement but to sustain assessment efforts for your program, department, or institution, both now and in the future.

- Chapter 9, "Guiding and Coordinating Assessment Efforts," pages 117–126.
- Chapter 25, "Sharing Evidence of Student Learning," pages 333–354.



## u10s1 - Learning Components

- Examine strategies for assessing learning outcomes in programs, departments, and institutions.
- Apply assessment strategies for student learning.

## u10a1 - Presentation of Assessment Plan

### Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan

*What can you accomplish with your new knowledge of assessment and evaluation in higher education?*

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to utilize your knowledge of assessment and evaluation in a position in higher or adult education, either now or in the future. Those who can plan and implement assessment effectively are in demand, for assessment is necessary to establish accountability and to generate improvement in education. Accordingly, your course project is to consist of two components. The first is a real-world, on-the-job presentation of a practical plan that you are encouraged to propose for implementation either in your current position or in the future. The second component of your course project is a paper that explains your rationale for the decisions you made as you designed your plan.

For the presentation of your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan, convert the plan, compiled from your Unit 6 and Unit 8 assignments and Units 8 and 9 discussions, into a PowerPoint or a Kaltura presentation. Create the presentation for a specific audience, such as a committee, an advisory board or a board of directors, or staff or faculty attending a department meeting. Be sure to follow the instructions for constructing the presentation carefully, for this is to be a professional presentation.

In the second component of your course project, the Rationale Paper, you will explain and support the decisions you made for your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan. This Rationale Paper should begin with an introduction that explains the meaning and value of assessment, examines common misconceptions about assessment, and presents strategies for engaging faculty or staff members in assessment efforts. You will use your Unit 3 assignment to create the content of this introduction. The remaining sections of the paper will align with the sections of the Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan, providing a rationale for what you propose in each section of your plan. Remember that the purpose of presenting your plan is to convince the decision-makers in your audience to consider implementing your plan. Both components of your course project are to be well supported by the required course readings, because when we develop assessment, we establish our credibility by using and citing authoritative sources.

### Instructions

Submit the following as your course project:

#### Component 1: Presentation of Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan

Create slides to present the content below. You have already developed most content throughout this course; be sure to incorporate instructor feedback on previous assignments as you make needed revisions and convert the content to PowerPoint slides. Include talking points, either by posting them in the comments section under each slide OR by recording them directly on the slides, to represent what you will be speaking during the presentation. Use a format appropriate for a PowerPoint presentation (see the Resources) as you develop the following content:

- An introduction of the program, course, department, or experience for which you are proposing this assessment plan. The introduction is also to present an explanation of the Assessment and Evaluation Cycle for your plan to assess learning outcomes.
- The learning goals that students or trainees are to achieve.
- The means of measuring achievement of the goals (assessment instruments, each of which is clearly related to the respective goals that they are intended to measure).
- The standards and/or targets used to define successful achievement.
- The internal and external stakeholders and their roles in the assessment effort.
- The steps needed to plan and develop the assessment effort before its actual implementation (the action plan).
- Proposed strategies to disseminate the results of the assessment.
- The connection of the assessment effort to the effectiveness of the program, department, or institution and its applicability to accreditation.
- Proposed strategies to use the results of the assessment to create improvements.
- Proposed strategies to build a culture of assessment.
- References used and cited in the presentation. *Please note:* List only references which were cited in the presentation, either on the slides or in the talking points.

#### Component 2: Rationale Paper

The paper, the second of the two major components of your course project, is to include the sections below. You have already developed most of the content throughout the units of this course. Your explanations must be well supported by the required course readings, because when we develop assessment, we establish our credibility by using and citing authoritative sources.

- Title page. For a refresher on how to format the title page, if needed, refer to the APA Style and Format Campus page (linked in the Resources).

- Table of Contents.
- An introduction that explains the meaning and value of assessment, examines common misconceptions about assessment, and presents strategies for engaging faculty or staff members in assessment efforts. (Use your Unit 3 assignment as the basis for the content of this introduction.)
- The remaining sections of the paper are to use the same headings as you used for the sections of your presentation of your Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan. Each section is to provide a rationale for what you propose in each section of your plan.
- References used and cited in the paper (minimum of six sources). *Please note:* Cite and list references used for your rationale paper.

Review both components of your course project for writing and APA formatting errors prior to submission. Errors should not appear in graduate-level assignments. Moreover, be sure to review the instructions and scoring guide to self-assess your work prior to submission.

*Note:* Your instructor may also use the Writing Feedback Tool to provide feedback on your writing. In the tool, click the linked resources for helpful writing information.

## Submission Requirements

Your final assignment is to meet the following requirements:

- **PowerPoint presentation:** Effectively designed slides to present the components of the *Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan*. Refer to Guidelines for Effective PowerPoint Presentations (provided in the Resources) for best practices.
- **Written communication:** Written communication is free of errors that detract from the overall message.
- **APA formatting:** Resources and citations are formatted according to current APA style and formatting.
- **Length:**
  - Presentation: 12–15 slides, each with talking points suitable for an audience during a live presentation, and an additional slide containing references. Handouts are optional.
  - Rationale paper: 7–10 pages.
- **Font and font size:**
  - Presentation: Appropriate for a PowerPoint presentation to the intended audience.
  - Rationale paper: Times New Roman, 12 points.

**Portfolio Prompt:** You are required to save this learning activity to your ePortfolio.

*Note:* Your instructor may also use the Writing Feedback Tool to provide feedback on your writing. In the tool, click the linked resources for helpful writing information.

### Course Resources

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[APA Style and Formatting](#)

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[Guidelines for Effective PowerPoint Presentations \[PPT\]](#)

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[PowerPoint Presentations Library Guide](#)

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[Using Kaltura](#)

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[ePortfolio](#)

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[Online ePortfolio Guidelines \[PDF\]](#)

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### Kaltura

1. Headset with microphone

## u10d1 - Keeping the Momentum Going

Reflect on what you have learned about the assessment of student learning during this course. Think back to your Discovering Assessment and Evaluation quiz in Unit 1, the examination of the controversy and consensus in Units 2 and 3, and the development of your own Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Plan presentation and the Rationale Paper in the remaining units.

In your initial post for this discussion, address the following:

1. Reflecting on your personal and professional experience, as well as the readings, discussions, and assignments in this course, explain how your current perspective has changed from your initial perspective in regard to assessment.
2. Next, imagine that you have just given a successful presentation to your specific audience. An audience member asks you questions about implementing and sustaining assessment that require more detail than you covered in your presentation. Using the assigned readings, state two questions that audience member might have, and post a concise but informative response to both.
3. Conclude your post by explaining how your work in this course can address any gap between your past and/or current experience and your future professional work in higher education.

## Response Guidelines

Respond to the posts of at least two other learners. Did the learner's questions and answers shed any additional light on your own understanding of how to implement and sustain assessment efforts? Do you have any final questions, recommendations, or comments for the learner as they prepare to deliver the presentation, either soon or in a future position in higher education?

Course Resources

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### Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

#### u10d1 - Learning Components

- Examine strategies for assessing learning outcomes in programs, departments, and institutions.
- Develop communications appropriate for the audience.
- Apply knowledge of APA style for references and citations.
- Communicate the value of assessment in an appropriate and effective manner.