FTCC ASSESSMENT:

The Nuts & Bolts

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Developing an Assessment Plan for Academic Units

The primary purpose of developing and implementing an assessment plan for an academic unit is to document the achievement of student learning outcomes and the continuous improvement of the program.

The major steps in developing an assessment plan for an academic unit are as follows:

Step 1: State the purpose of your unit

The Purpose Statement describes why the unit exists. In writing the purpose statement, consider the following:
- Who is served?
- What are the primary functions?
- What are the core activities?

The purpose statement serves as a direct link between the college purpose statement and strategic goals and the more specific outcomes of the unit.

Step 2: **Develop the intended outcomes for your unit** (minimum of 3)

Intended outcomes are specific statements describing what students should know (cognitive), think (attitudinal) or do (behavioral) when they have completed a program.   Developing your program outcomes is the most important step in assessment planning.   Each instructional unit is expected to assess and document three intended learning outcomes annually, one of which will be a college-wide learning outcome (see note). The aim is to develop purposeful, substantive outcomes.

NOTE: In order to assess the FTCC General Education Core Competency related to critical thinking, all instructional assessment plans will incorporate this competency into Outcome #1 on their assessment plan. The outcome statement must include the following phrase "Students will be able to use information to analyze problems and make logical decisions (in, while, during, by, etc) …"

Examples of types of student learning outcomes are:

Student knowledge of content specific to the major or the discipline
- Knowledge of content in the liberal arts
- Competencies attained in the General Education core requirements, i.e. oral and written communications, mathematics, critical thinking, problem solving, computer literacy

Behavioral Change and Performance:
- hands-on skills required for effective practice in the major or for employment
- interpersonal skills
- listening skills
- teamwork, leadership skills
- on-the-job performance; perceptions of employers or internship supervisors
- College transfer success; further education
- community contributions, professional activities
- job placement
- student persistence, completion

Attitudinal:

- current students', graduates', and early leavers' satisfaction with their program, the college, support services, learning resources, educational experiences, etc.
- employers' attitudes and opinions about program graduates
- student changes/gains in personal, social or ethical attitudes and values

One way to select a learning outcome:

A very good method for developing specific program outcomes is for the assessment coordinator and all other faculty teaching in the program to meet and prepare a list of the skills, knowledge and attitudes that all graduates of that program are expected to achieve. From this list, faculty can select the learning outcomes to include in their annual assessment plan.

Some good sources to review for developing the list of expected learning outcomes for your program's graduates are:
- The minimum skills and competencies required for entry-level employment in a field as identified by employers, advisory committee members or from occupational standards.
- Criteria and student competencies set forth by **accreditation, licensing and certification boards or agencies for occupations** such as nursing, radiography, pharmacy technology, real estate, accounting, cosmetology, welding, automotive, construction, truck driving and many other programs.
- Course syllabi
- Faculty group discussion and input
- North Carolina Community College's curriculum standards by program

Step 3: Establish the measures for each learning outcome

After developing your intended learning outcomes, ask yourself how you will collect evidence to prove students have the skills, knowledge and attitudes you have listed. Ask yourself what <u>sources of information</u> would provide you with data you need for determining student success? It is best to have more than one source of information to determine success. Remember not to use individual student grades as a method for measuring success but instead, you may use aggregate or group performance. Evaluations by an outside third party such as advisory committee members, a panel of faculty, criteria established by accreditation or licensing agencies or other experts in the field are all excellent procedures or assessment methods.

Here are a few examples of appropriate assessment methods that could be used for collecting data:

- Use of tests and exams locally or commercially produced to collect group performance
- Comparison of student performance against criteria established by accreditation, certification or licensing boards or agencies
- Student portfolios of work sampled and collected over time
- Pre-test and post-test comparisons of group performance
- Student juried exhibitions of work, products
- Clinical evaluations
- Products such as papers or oral presentations judged by peers, experts
- Observations of students in case studies or problem-solving situations
- Students' demonstration of hands-on skills
- Public performances
- Use of standardized exams for comparison of norms
- Licensure and certification exam group results
- Supported opinions of external or third party evaluators
- Use of surveys or interviews of graduates, current students and early leavers
- Use of survey or interviews of employers about learning demonstrated on the job or during Co-op experience
- College transfer student performance reports
- Graduate employment data
- Advisory committee opinions of the program and student performance

Step 4: Determine the achievement target

The achievement target is very important because it will establish the success criteria for that particular outcome.

The faculty should collectively decide the achievement target (success criteria). In doing this, you should think about the level at which students ought to perform

or the "ideal state" rather than a modest target that you know can be achieved and is "safe" to assess. Using assessment data to improve a program is greatly diminished when the criteria for success is not set at the level students ought to be achieving.

Here are just a few examples of achievement targets. Also included are the measures of assessment on which the targets are based. The achievement target is underlined and the measure (source of the data) is in **bold**.

- 95 percent of the graduates in automotive technology will be able to successfully demonstrate all the **skills outlined in the NESA certification manual that are required for certification by NESA**
- 95 percent of students taking the **licensure exam for Nursing** will pass on first sitting.
- 80 percent of accounting program graduates, as judged by a jury of faculty from the department, will successfully complete a **major accounting project utilizing microcomputer applications during one of several classes their last semester**.
- 85 percent of computer engineering graduates will agree or strongly agree with the statement on the **Graduating Student Opinion Survey** "The technology used in my program was up-to-date with technology in the computer engineering field."
- 85 percent of the college transfer students will have a GPA of 2.0 or greater the two semesters following transfer to a UNC 4-year institution as indicted on the annual **Transfer Student Performance Report**.
- 50 percent of the welding graduates will report employment in field on the **Graduating Student Opinion Survey administered at the time of program completion.**
- 80 percent of writing samples selected at the end of English 111 will pass the **faculty written standards rubrics**. No single rubric will show that more than ¼ of the ratings fell into the categories of "needs improvement" or "unsatisfactory".
- At the close of their final semester, 90 percent of the automotive students will correctly diagnose and estimate the cost of repairs needed on an automobile as assigned within a given period of time and **evaluated by a panel of automotive of faculty.**
- 90 percent of the program non-completers surveyed will report reasons other than dissatisfaction with the college or their program as cause for withdrawing from the college as indicated on **their withdrawal form**.
- **A panel of reviewers** will confirm that 90 percent of the student portfolios reflect the progressive development of critical thinking skills over time in the program.
- 95 percent of employers of the Business Administration graduates will indicate on the **Employer Survey** that they are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with graduates' job performance and would hire them again.

Step 5: Conduct assessment activities/implement the plan

Put your assessment plan into action and begin collecting data. Determine which activities are to be conducted at the college level (such as surveys) and those to be carried out by you or others in your program. If you are using college surveys, check with the Research Office to be sure the questions relate directly to your learning outcomes so you will get back useful information.

Step 6: Report findings

Give a brief summary of your results, your findings and 'what happened'. Your summary should be complete enough to convince the reader the plan took place. Make sure your **results** relate back to the intended outcome. What did the findings tell you? Did you meet your targets for success? Is further planning and assessment needed? Keep a file or record of your more detailed documentation such as copies of surveys, skill check sheets, examples of student work, rubrics, etc. for reviewing progress over time.

Step 7: Develop an action plan (for unmet achievement targets)

For any outcome that did not meet its achievement target, state the changes, improvements or modifications will you make (or have already made) that will help improve student performance.   Describe what future action the unit plans to take or has taken to insure the outcome is met. It may be the case that the achievement target itself should be reevaluated.

Step 8: Analyze your results

What was learned from the results? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the assessment process?   What will be the future direction of the unit?

This step is called "closing the loop" because it is the final step in the annual planning 'cycle' or 'loop'. This step provides documentation that **continuous improvement** is taking place by using the results of the assessment process to direct future course of action. Here are a few examples of some typical changes or improvements one might mention in the analysis section of an assessment plan:

- Teaching a new skill or concept in the curriculum to stay current
- Changes in the curriculum or course content
- Increasing time devoted to teaching a concept or skill
- Changes in teaching methods
- Pre-requisite course changes or changes to the program of study
- Amending syllabi

- Implementing advisory committee recommendations
- Integrating technology into the curriculum
- Raising your 'criteria for success' the next planning cycle
- Making organizational changes
- Changes in advising or support services
- Changes to policies or the creation of new ones

Steps 7 and 8 "close the loop" on the assessment process**.** They demonstrate that you use the information learned to effect **continuous improvement** in your program. This analysis lays the groundwork for the next year's assessment plan and becomes part of a continuous cycle of reflection, investigation, and improvement.

Step 9: Develop an Assessment Plan for the next assessment cycle

Based on your analysis of what was learned, achieved, or examined in the recently completed assessment cycle, develop a plan for the upcoming cycle. Determine your outcomes (you may decide to assess a completely different outcome or revisit a current one), develop the measures for those outcomes, and set your achievement targets.

Developing an Assessment Plan for Administrative/Educational Support Units

The primary purpose of developing and implementing an assessment plan is to examine how well a unit is fulfilling its purpose. This is accomplished by developing an annual plan that documents the achievement of expected outcomes and promotes continuous improvement. All support units should assess the effectiveness of their operations, processes and programs on a continual basis. The steps in developing an assessment plan are as follows:

Step 1 – Develop a Purpose Statement
The purpose statement serves as a direct link between the mission and goals of the college and the outcomes specific to the unit. In writing the purpose statement, consider the following questions:
- Who is served?
- What are the primary functions of the unit?
- What are the core activities?

Step 2 - Determine Intended Outcomes
In determining the intended outcomes, consider these key questions:
- What results should be expected after providing services?
- What indicates that a unit is both efficient and effective?
- What does the end user experience through interaction with the unit?

Unit outcomes may be concerned with:
- Level or volume of activity. Support units often justify their existence based on the amount of service provided or work accomplished.
- Efficiency with which a unit produces or works. This might include cost savings measures, turnaround time, improving a process, etc.
- Compliance with external standards or regulations, established Professional Standards, or "Best Practice" standards. There are many standards such as OSHA or fire marshal's standards, health department requirements, American Library Association, Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS), federal and state laws, regulations, audits, accounting practices, and peer reviews to name a few.
- Benchmarking performance by using comparative data collected from other colleges.
- Gains made by those who are served. For example, what can a client do or know after interacting with the unit? What is the outcome of a student's involvement with the unit?
- Client satisfaction - how do those who are served rate their satisfaction with the unit's services?
- What does the end user experience through interaction with the unit?

A few examples of unit intended outcomes:
- *The library will meet or exceed the standards established by the American Library Association.*
- *The college bookstore will provide textbooks to students and faculty in a timely manner.*
- *Food Services will receive superior ratings from monthly Health Department inspections.*
- *The Financial Aid Office will receive clean audits with no exceptions.*
- *Students will be able to successfully access library resources using a variety of formats upon completion of a library orientation workshop.*
- *Faculty will successfully implement video on demand following a training session provided by the instructional department.*
- *Graduates receiving help from the Career Center will be able to produce an acceptable resume*
- *Employees and students will be satisfied with the cleanliness of the college facilities.*
- *Patrons will be satisfied with the LRC hours of operation.*
- *Students will be satisfied with the advising process.*
- *Purchasing and Receiving will reduce lost or stolen inventory by 2%.*

Step 3 – Devise the Measures for Evaluating Outcomes
There must be a procedure in place for measuring the attainment of outcomes. This involves a description of the what, why, how, when, and who of evidence collection. There may already be an inventory of information and data sources (such as audit reports or counts of services) that could be used. Evaluations by an outside, third party such as auditors, professional standards, or experts in the field are excellent (although not required).

Remember these common types of assessment:
- Attitudinal - measures of satisfaction from those you serve
- Direct - counts of unit services
- External - validation by a neutral party, auditor, professional standards, etc.

Step 4 – Define the 'Achievement Target" that Represents Success
The criteria for success should answer this question: "If our unit is functioning the way we think it 'ought' to function, what will our target or score be?" Always aim for a success level that stretches the unit's performance. It is possible to have more than one target or criteria for measuring success. Sample targets:
- At least 80% of eligible employees will participate in training.
- 90% of transcripts will be processed and mailed to students within three days.
- 90% of the forms processed will be free of errors.
- 99% of clients will be 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the time it takes to receive print jobs.

Step 5 - Implement the Plan
Put the plan into action and begin collecting data. Determine which activities are to be conducted at the college level (such as surveys already in use and administered by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment) and those to be carried out by the unit. Also check for any activities that may already be available within the unit that would clearly demonstrate evidence of the outcomes. If established college surveys are used, check with the IEA Office to make sure the questions relate directly to the outcomes that are being assessed.

Step 6 – Report Findings
In addition to describing results and reporting findings, give a brief summary of "what happened". The summary should be complete enough to convince the reader the plan took place. Make sure the findings relate back to the intended outcome. Keep a file of the more detailed documentation such as copies of surveys, data sheets, or related internal or external reports.

Step 7 - **Develop an Action Plan (for unmet achievement targets)**
For any achievement target that is not met, describe what future action the unit will take to ensure that the outcome is achieved. Clearly state what changes or modifications can be made to help improve performance or function related to that outcome. It may be the case that the achievement target itself should be reevaluated.

Step 8- Analyze
What was learned from the results? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the assessment process?   What will be the future direction of the unit?

This step is called "closing the loop" because it is the final step in the annual planning 'cycle' or 'loop'. This step provides documentation that **continuous improvement** is taking place by using the results of the assessment process to direct future course of action. Here are a few examples of some typical changes or improvements that might be seen in a support unit plan:
- Organizational changes
- Increasing time devoted to a service
- Changes in hours of operation
- Modifications to procedures
- Creation of new policies or procedures
- Clean audits or error free reports
- Increased client satisfaction
- Eliminating services or adding new services
- Increase in clients served
- Implementing suggestions from surveys
- Raising the achievement target for the next planning cycle

Step 9 - Develop an Assessment Plan for the Next Assessment Cycle
Based on the analysis of what was learned, achieved, or examined in the recently completed assessment cycle, develop a plan for the upcoming cycle. Determine the new outcomes (it may be the case that "old" ones are revisited), develop the measures for those outcomes, and set the achievement targets.

Suggestions for Outcomes

When trying to determine the outcomes statements in your assessment plan, recall that outcomes must be specific and measurable. What is it that your office intends to examine or accomplish? The following statements (in bold) might provide you with ideas for developing the outcomes for your unit:

1. **Review and report on randomly selected assessment plans from specific subordinate units within your administrative unit**. This could be a good way to ensure that the assessment process is "alive and well" in your unit. In the "Findings" portion of the WEAVEonline assessment plan, you could compile results from all areas examined and discuss how your unit is achieving "as a whole". Example: "The Office of (your unit) will randomly select (how many?) assessment plans from (your unit) to analyze and review for effectiveness and evidence of assessment."

2. **Examine strategic plan elements specific to your administrative unit.** Using the strategic plan as a guide, select one of the objectives from your unit as an outcome and follow the assessment protocol. While the Strategic Plan does include measures and evaluation, it does not require the in-depth report of findings and analyses that lead to decisions that affect future planning.

3. **Select a strategy or process that would support an outcome being measured in the assessment plan for the office of your immediate supervisor.** Consider what your area (or your subordinate areas) could do to help achieve or support an outcome stipulated by that office. Determine how your outcome could be measured and decide what success would look like.

4. **Identify and validate critical resource needs from subordinate units for inclusion into the Strategic Plan.** With the Planning and Budgeting Reports feature in WEAVEonline, you can view the resources identified by each subordinate unit as critical for improving performance. The action plans and analysis for each unit can then be examined to help establish a prioritized list of needed resources for incorporation into the Strategic Plan. This would ensure that the assessment process for all subordinate units plays an integral role in making planning and budget decisions.

5. **Select a current practice or process (specific to your unit) that has not been recently assessed.** Is there something that isn't working as

6. **Implement a new practice or procedure.** Use the assessment protocol to monitor the newly implemented practice and determine if it is viable.

Quick-Start Guide to WEAVEonline

1. WEAVEonline may be accessed from the FTCC Homepage by clicking on the Institutional Effectiveness link listed under "Quick Links". Scroll down the page to find "WEAVEonline login", located just below the FTCC mission statement. Click on this link to open the page where you will enter your WEAVEonline ID and password.

2. Your WEAVEonline ID is the same as your Groupwise name (before the @ symbol). Your initial WEAVEonline password is "ftcc". Upon first entry, you will be prompted to enter a permanent password.

3. The **Home** screen opens up upon login and contains general news items. There will be a blue navigational bar at the top of the screen. The top tabs, with their subsequent drop down menus, are used to enter assessment data (**Assessments**), run reports (**Reports**), and to logout (**Logout**). The availability of menu tabs is determined by each user's assigned role.

4. To enter or edit your assessment plan, select the desired assessment cycle from the drop-down menu.

5. Select the desired entity (program/unit) from the dropdown menu. The entities are listed in alphabetical order. The default is the last entity accessed by the user.

6. The majority of data entry will be accomplished using the **Assessments** menu options. This is where each unit's mission/purpose, outcomes, measures & findings, action plan tracking, annual reports, achievement summaries/analysis, and document repository are located. (Achievement targets are accessible from the **Measures** screen).

7. The **Document Repository** (accessible from the **Assessments** menu) allows units to upload, access, and store documents that support the unit's assessment plan.

8. All users also have access to the online WEAVEonline Help menu which is accessed by clicking the question mark inside the small blue circle located in the upper-right corner of your screen. Help topics vary according to the page currently open.

Beginning the Assessment Cycle Information: Procedure for inputting Outcomes, Measures, and Achievement Targets into WEAVEonline

1. After logging in, select the cycle, and use the drop-down box to select your entity Click on the **Assessment** tab on the blue navigation bar.
2. Select **Mission/Purpose.** Enter your unit's purpose statement in the text box that appears. Underneath the text box, select "keep active" for the "active through cycle" entry.   Hit "final" if you are completely done entering the statement. Hit "draft/in-progress if you want to return to the statement. Click on the "save" button to lock in your entry, finished or not.
3. Select **Outcomes/Objectives** (under the Assessment tab). Click on the "add" button. Next to "established in cycle", choose the cycle in which the outcome will first appear.   Select the same cycle for the "active through cycle" entry.
    a. Enter your outcome statement in the text box that appears. Note: you must also enter a condensed description of your outcome in the space provided.
    b. Use the "add associations" button under <u>General Education/Core Competencies</u> (Academic Units), <u>Institutional Priorities</u>, and <u>Strategic Plan</u> to indicate which specific statement your outcome supports.   By placing a check mark in the box next to any statement that your outcome supports, and then hitting the "save" button at the bottom of the screen,   all selections will be included in your assessment plan. All units should make selections under Institutional Priorities and Strategic Plan. Academic units should also make a selection under General Education or Core Curriculum. Academic units with specialized accreditation agencies (such as Dental Hygiene or Civil Engineering) will see a link to objectives for that agency.
    c. Hit "final" if you are completely done entering information. Hit "draft/in-progress if you need to finish the process later. Click on the "save" button to lock in your entry (finished or not).

**Repeat this process for each of your three outcomes
before inputting your measures.**

4. Select **Measures & Findings** (under the Assessment tab). This is the section where you enter the "who, what, why, how, and when" for your plan. Click on the "add" button.
    a. Select the source of evidence that best describes the method you intend to use.
    b. Enter the description of your measurement process in the text box that appears. Note: you must also enter a condensed description of your measure in the space provided.
    c. Under "select related outcome/objective", choose the outcome statement for which the measure is intended.
    d. Next to "established in cycle", choose the cycle in which the outcome will first appear.   Select the same cycle for the "active through cycle" entry.

e. Hit "final" if you are completely done entering information. Hit "draft/in-progress if you need to finish the process later. Click on the "save" button to lock in your entry (finished or not).

Repeat this process for each of your three measures
before inputting your achievement targets.

5. As you return to the Measures & Finding page, click on the arrow next to Measure #1. Click on the button underneath the description of the measure that says "**add achievement target**". This is where the success criteria for outcome achievement will be set.
   a. Enter the description of your achievement target in the text box that appears.
   b. Next to "established in cycle", choose the cycle in which the target applies. Select the same cycle for the "active through cycle" entry.
   c. Hit "final" if you are completely done entering information. Hit "draft/in-progress if you need to finish the process later. Click on the "save" button to lock in your entry (finished or not).

Repeat this process for each of your three achievement targets.

6. It is possible to attach any documents (Word, Excel, or PDF format) to any area within WEAVEonline by doing the following:
   a. Select Document Repository under Assessment tab
   b. Choose "browse" to find the file to be uploaded
   c. Enter document name
   d. Do "save & continue"
   e. Click on the arrow next to the general area in which you want to associate your document
   f. Place a check in the box next to the specific area
   g. Hit "save"
   h. The link to the document will be associated with the narrative for that section

Ending the Assessment Cycle Information: Procedure for Reporting Assessment Findings and Analysis Results in WEAVEonline:

1. After logging in, select the cycle and use the drop-down box to select your entity (academic or support unit). Click on the **Assessment** tab on the blue navigation bar.
2. Select **Measures & Findings**. Scroll down the page to the **Measures** heading. Click on the arrow beside **Measure #1**.
3. Under the expanded description of Measure #1 and its related Achievement Target, there will be an **Add Finding** button. Click on the button to bring up a text box for entering the findings for Outcome #1. It is here where you will discuss the results of the measurement process for that particular outcome. Report the data and discuss the results. You can build a table within the textbox, if desired. You can also upload supporting evidence or documents into the document repository and associate it with your findings:
    i. Select Document Repository under Assessment tab
    ii. Choose "browse" to find the file to be uploaded
    iii. Enter document name
    iv. Do "save & continue"
    v. Click on the arrow next to Measures & Findings
    vi. Place a check in the box next to Findings under the appropriate heading for your measure
    vii. Hit "save"
    viii. The link to the document will be associated with the narrative for that section
4. Look below the findings textbox and Indicate whether your achievement target was <u>met</u>, <u>partially met</u>, or <u>not met</u>.
5. Targets that were <u>partially met</u> or <u>not met</u> require that an **Action Plan** be developed. An **Action Plan** should attempt to provide a "fix" when an achievement target is not achieved. This could range from implementation of new techniques to a re-examination of the original measure or target. To file an Action Plan, return to "Measures & Findings" and click on the arrow next to the appropriate measure. An **Add Action Plan** button will appear underneath the expanded measure.
6. Repeat steps 2 through 4 (and possibly 5) for each of the other outcomes.
7. Go to the Assessments tab and choose **Achievement Summary/Analysis**. There will be four questions to respond to concerning the strengths, weaknesses, and impact of your assessment process. If you click on the arrow beside each question you will be able to add a response in the textbox that is provided. These questions refer to the assessment process as a whole and do not require individual responses for each outcome. This is the place where you can discuss the things that you might do differently or better in the next assessment cycle as you reflect upon the current year's findings.

When you are ready to begin formulating the outcomes, measures, and achievement targets for the subsequent assessment cycle, be sure to use the results of the previous cycle to influence your decisions. Your assessment findings and analysis should impact the direction and planning of the new cycle.