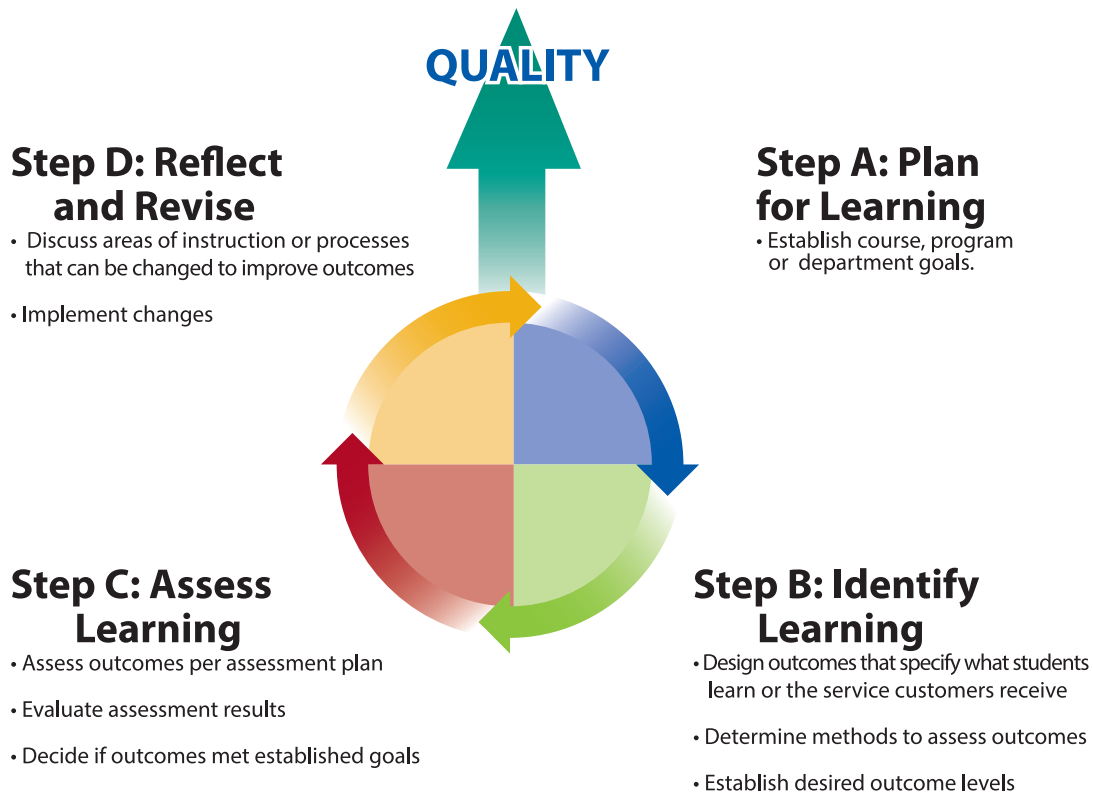




Assessment Cycle

IV. ASSESSMENT CYCLE



The following steps comprise the assessment cycle:

Step A: Plan for Learning

Establish course, program, or department goals

Prior to writing course or program outcomes, faculty should meet with their program or department colleagues and advisory groups to establish goals. This process should also include a review of the program or department mission statement and the institutional learning outcomes.

Step B: Identify Learning

Design outcomes that specify what students learn or the service customers receive

Using the information collected in Step A, outcomes are written to describe what students need to be able to do upon completion of the course, program, or service function that we are responsible for teaching or providing the related knowledge/skills (Stiehl and Lewchuk, *The Outcomes Primer*, 2008). Outcomes may align with certification or professional standards. Outcomes need to be objective and measurable.

Determine methods to assess outcomes

Student learning outcomes assessment is incremental and systematic. Course and program level learning outcomes assessment is integrated into the program review and annual update process.

Establish desired outcome levels

Assessments are only meaningful when specific target/performance achievement levels are identified in advance. Performance levels express in concrete and measurable/observable terms expected proficiency of specific course or program student learning outcomes. Note that grades alone do not provide adequate feedback to students' performance because grades represent overall competency of students and do not identify strengths and weaknesses on specific learning outcomes. (Osters, Sandi, Gavilan College, Writing Measurable Learning Outcomes) Student learning outcomes may be assessed using different instruments than evaluations used for determining grades. Grades may also include factors not related to student learning outcomes (e.g., attendance, participation).

Step C: Assess Learning

Assess outcomes per assessment plan

The assessment plan lives within program review and demonstrates alignment of courses and services with program student learning outcomes. The plan includes a schedule for conducting assessments over the forthcoming six years. All course/service outcomes may not be assessed every semester but should be assessed at least once during the assessment plan cycle. Faculty are encouraged to assess at least one course learning outcome each time the course is offered.

Evaluate Assessment Results

After data is collected, it should be analyzed to determine and document results, including:

1. How students are performing?
2. To the extent students are not performing well on a specific learning outcome, is this typically a difficult concept for which proficiency is constantly a challenge?
3. If the outcomes were assessed with multiple measures, how do the results compare?
4. If outcomes were assessed in the past, are trends occurring?

Decide if assessment results met established goals

After the data collection for one or more outcomes has taken place, discussions should review how well students performed. Questions to consider include:

1. Did their performance meet expectations?
2. Do the data accurately measure the outcome being assessed?
3. Do adjustments need to be made?
4. What resources are needed to maintain this level?

Step D: Reflect and Revise

Discuss areas of instruction or processes that can be changed to improve outcomes

At the end of each assessment cycle, before the beginning of the next cycle, the stakeholders will meet to discuss the results and the process, and to:

- Identify the gaps between desired and actual results;
- Document the results; and
- Outline desired changes in curriculum, instructional materials and resources and/or teaching and assessment strategies.

Implement changes

The results will be included in the comprehensive six-year Program Review or Annual update. Annual institutional planning and resource allocations are driven by assessment results and subsequent program goals.

