



THE UNIVERSITY *of* NORTH CAROLINA
GREENSBORO

Administrative Assessment
Handbook 2020-2021
Academic Year

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
What is assessment?.....	3
Purposes of Assessment.....	4
Developing the Administrative Assessment Plan	5
Assessment Cycle and Flowchart	5
Step 1: Define the Mission Statement	6
Step 2: Define the Objectives.....	6
Step 3: Identify Measures for Each Objective, and a Target for Each Measure	7
Step 4: Conduct Assessments and Record Findings	9
Step 5: Analyze findings and Identify Action Plans for the Next Academic Year	9
Step 6: Write Assessment Report.....	10
Appendix.....	11
Administrative Assessment Calendar	11
Administrative Assessment Plan Rubric.....	12

Introduction

Institutions of higher learning are becoming increasingly involved in conducting assessment within their academic administrative units and administrative support organizations. The desire to know how well the entity is doing and to improve in strategic planning efforts, decision support, resource allocation, and operational excellence are all motivators for conducting assessment.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) engages all of its academic programs and administrative entities in the assessment process. This document is meant to provide background information about assessment as a whole at the University, and guidance as administrative entities create assessment plans for their areas. We begin with a high-level look at assessment across campus, then provide details about administrative assessment that should be used for preparing administrative assessment plans.

What is assessment?

Assessment is the ongoing and systematic process of identifying objectives and means to measure them, gathering measurements of the objectives, using the information to make decisions about improvement, and implementing improvements based on the data gathered. The most important aspect of this definition, if emphasis could be drawn to one item, is the *using* of information.

Assessment at UNCG is intended to help all students, faculty, staff, and administrators by providing information that guides decisions and leads to improvement in learning, teaching, and services.

At UNCG, assessment consists of an assessment plan (mission, objectives, measures, and targets), and an assessment report (findings and action plan(s)). Assessment plans are created at the start of the academic year. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) reviews the plans and feedback is provided to the entities.

Entities collect the data identified in the measures throughout the administrative year, then compose an assessment report. The report asks units to analyze the data and draw conclusions from it. Strengths, weaknesses, and highlights are described. Then, the entities develop action plans, which should be reflected directly or indirectly in the objectives, measures, and targets of the assessment plan for the next administrative year. Finally we record the results of those action plans in follow-up statements

Purposes of Assessment

The four main purposes of assessment should be:

1. **To improve** – The assessment process should provide feedback to determine how the administrative unit can be improved.
2. **To inform** – The assessment process should inform department heads and other decision-makers of the contributions and impact of the administrative unit to the development and growth of students.
3. **To prove** – The assessment process should encapsulate and demonstrate what the administrative entity is accomplishing to students, faculty, staff, and outsiders.
4. **To support** – The assessment process should provide support for campus decision-making activities such as unit review and strategic planning, as well as external accountability activities such as accreditation.

Additionally, assessment is effective when:

1. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.
2. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated objectives.
3. Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.
4. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the university community are involved.
5. Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.
6. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.

Assessment is best prepared and supported when a group from the division, unit, or dept/office participates in creating objectives and measures. It is highly recommended, and emphasized by our accrediting body, that assessment plans be developed by a committee within the entity. It is thought to be unwise to put the responsibility for developing an assessment plan in the hands of a single person. Instead, this should be a group effort to ensure understanding, participation, and success in achieving goals.

As divisions, units, or depts/offices develop their plans and reports, they should keep these principles in mind. They provide sound guidance which should make assessment easier, primarily by pointing out that the institution guides objectives through its mission and values.

Developing the Administrative Assessment Plan

A crucial part of developing an assessment plan is to clarify the focus and content of your plan, which should be based on the needs of your administrative unit. The assessment approach will depend on your entity's mission.

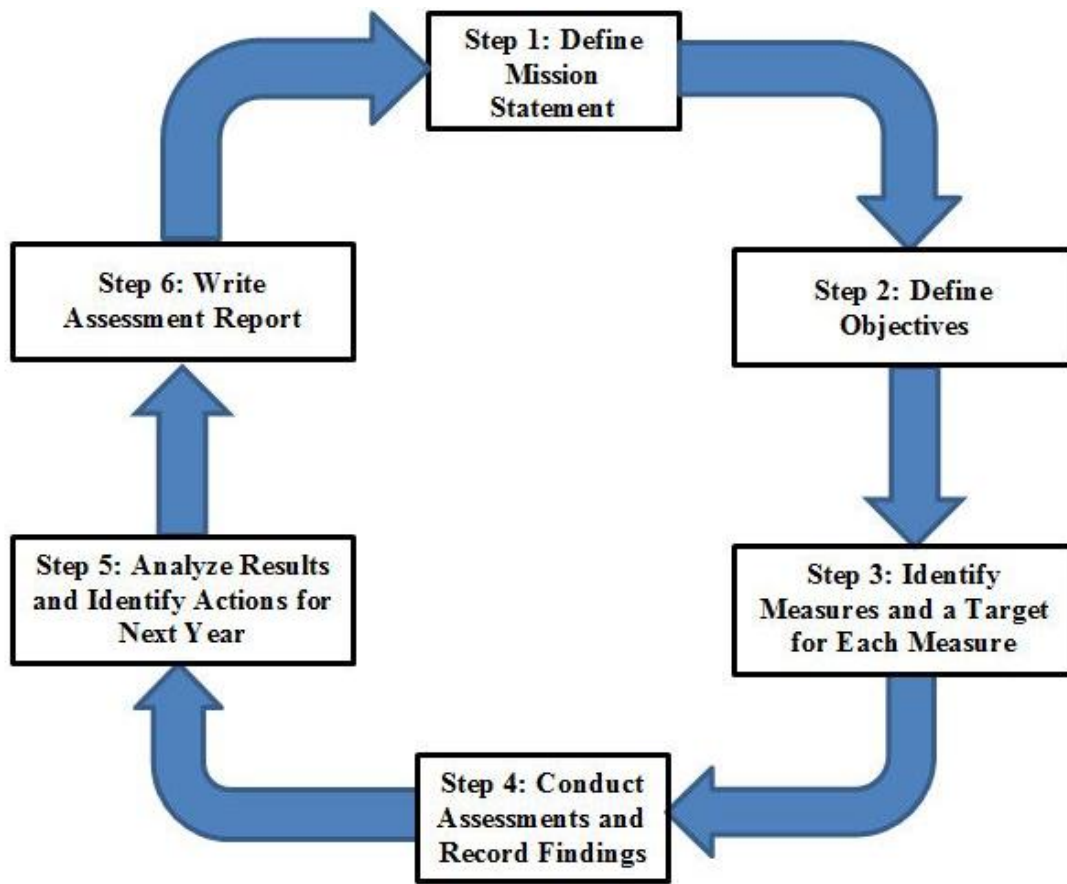
Assessment should be ongoing, with data being collected throughout the year. If the assessment data reveals a problem, and the entity can identify actions to remedy it immediately, they should fix the problem.

Assessment should improve divisions, units, and depts/office, not hinder them. An assessment, by progressing from year to year, should provide evidence of continuous improvement within the entity.

Using a systematic approach will help you in devising an effective assessment plan that matches the needs of your administrative entity. The following is a six step approach to aid in developing an effective plan.

Assessment Cycle and Flowchart

Assessment should be understood as a cycle. The administrative assessment calendar at UNCG is synced to the academic calendar (July 1- June 30). We prepare our assessment plans at the start of the administrative year, and we report our findings and analysis at the conclusion of the year.



Each step is covered in detail in the following pages.

Preplan

Organize for assessment

Before assessment can begin, key staff, committees and structures must be identified. One or more persons may lead the unit assessment process, but it is crucial for all staff to assume the responsibility for designing, implementing, and carrying out the assessment process.

Note

Staff participation and ownership is essential in the success of an administrative assessment plan.

Step 1:

Define the Mission Statement

A mission statement is a description of what a division, unit, or dept/office does, and what philosophy and principles guide it. This statement should be succinct, but should still convey how the unit supports the mission of the institution. A mission statement should only be rewritten when an entity experiences a significant change, so these sentences should be constructed to stand for the foreseeable future.

Step 2:

Define the Objectives

Administrative objectives at UNCG should reflect what the entity's decision makers have identified as the important initiatives or improvements for the administrative year. Entities should not use their normal operations as part of their initiatives, but should focus on improvements and special projects that will enhance the entity.

The intent of assessment is to keep units moving toward improvement in their operations. Objectives are statements of intention, describing a task to accomplish or a goal to meet. They are specific, measurable, and quantifiable statements that can be used to determine progress towards the overall mission of the entity. Objectives can be reasonably achieved within an expected timeframe and with available resources. Objectives must be tied to either the division strategic plan or the overarching University strategic plan, so these must be considered when creating an assessment plan.

Formula

A general formula for writing an objective can be employed, although following this formula is not required:

Objective = Target/subject + verb/action + object + modifiers

Administrative Objective Example: Increase research skills of UNCG researchers by developing and conducting workshops and seminars on analyzing research.

Increase (verb) research skills (object) of UNCG researchers (target) by developing and conducting workshops and seminars on analyzing research (modifiers).

Note:

Giant Steps Matrix

Each Objective is followed by a Giant Steps Matrix, which represents UNCG's strategic planning initiatives.

	Student Transformation	Knowledge Transformation	Regional Transformation
Health and Wellness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vibrant Communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Global Connections	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The intersection of each area of transformation (Student, Knowledge, and Regional) and each of the thematic areas of focus (Health and Wellness, Vibrant Communities, and Global Connections) is represented. If your objective links to one or more of these intersections, check the box or boxes. When you indicate this connection, your data will be provided to the Chancellor's Office to enhance information collected about the Giant Steps agenda.

Step 3: **Identify Measures for Each Objective, and a Target for Each Measure**

A measure identifies evidence and methods you will use to determine whether you are achieving expected results and provide evidence that the entity is accomplishing its objectives. Measures should be quantitative and show performance compared to criteria for success in relation to expected objectives.

In collecting this evidence, the entity should learn two things: (1) whether the objective is being met, (2) where there is room for improvement toward the objective. For each objective, at least 1- 2 measures must be identified to gather this needed information, ideally one direct and one indirect. Each objective must have at least one direct measure.

Direct vs. Indirect

There are two types of measures, direct and indirect.

Direct measures are more powerful because they provide data that correlate exactly with the objective. Direct measure explains what *specific* activity will be undertaken to show the extent to which an objective has been accomplished, and to provide information that may be used to make decisions for improvements in following years.

Direct Measure Example: Count the number of prospective students sent emails. (To fit the objective “increase number of prospective students sent emails.”)

Each objective must have at least one direct measure associated with it, but multiple direct measures are often used to validate evidence. For example, an office might identify “Replace in-person meetings for meetings using Zoom” as an objective. They could use “Compare number of in-person meetings for meetings using Zoom” as a measure.

Indirect measures are valid if paired with a direct measure, but they are weak in terms of evidence. Indirect measures ask for opinion or perception about an outcome that is otherwise measurable. Student surveys, alumni surveys, and focus groups are examples of indirect measures.

Indirect Measure Example: Survey customers about their satisfaction with the number of parking spaces available for visitors. (To fit the objective “increase the number of parking spaces available for visitors.”)

Final thoughts on measures

Measures may not tell you why objectives are or are not being met. However, they should be specific enough to answer *whether or not* the objective is being met. When the expected levels of achievement are not met, the measures should help lead the entity to identify problem areas and decide on actions to improve the results.

Creating a Target

Targets should flow easily from the measures that are set. Targets have a single purpose, which is to communicate clearly the level accomplishment for the particular measure. Targets must always indicate what is expected to be achieved in this single, current administrative year.

Specific Numbers

Targets must have specific numbers in them which indicate the level of accomplishment for the measure. Targets can indicate a number or percentage of items, people, or activities, or they can indicate a designated level of proficiency, or both.

Target example #1, the target is the percentage of members who will participate in the group exercise at the Kaplan Center: 5% of Kaplan Center members will participate in the group exercise.

Target example #2, the level of proficiency is indicated: “The mean of students’ rating of ‘speediness of refund process’ will increase to 4.0 (mean = 3.0 last year).”

Target example #3, two targets indicate the percentage of staff members and an expected level of proficiency: 100% of staff members who complete the Card Ser Training will answer 7 out of 10 questions correctly on a 10-question quiz at the end of the training session.

There is no easy rule for determining what the targets should be for any objective. Generally, an entity either has an idea of the current level of achievement and defines a new target from that, or they have a desired level of achievement and work toward that.

Targets Formula:

Target = Level + subject + action + object + modifiers

Target Example: 90% (level) of first year experience students (target) will rate on a customer satisfaction survey (action) their S experience (object) as a 3 (satisfactory) or better on a 5-point scale (modifiers).

Definitions

It is important to note that targets must be clear not just in numbers, but in words. “Satisfactory” and “successful” are positive, but they are not commonly understood. A better way to define these concepts, is to share the rating scale. Does “satisfactory” mean 3 out of 5 points? Does successful mean fewer than 5 mistakes? Define a target so that the meaning is easily understood.

Step 4: Conduct Assessments and Record Findings

At the end of the administrative year, each unit must write an assessment report which consists of the findings, action plan(s), and analysis. The first step is to collect the findings (or results) associated with each measure. Findings are merely the quantifiable data, without any analysis, that result when the measures listed in the assessment plan are completed.

The data entered as Findings should indicate the results as they are phrased in the measure description.

Findings Example 1: Student satisfaction survey showed an increase of 5% in overall satisfaction between 03-04 and 04-05. (03-04: n=25; mean = 3.82) (04-05: n=27; mean = 4.01)

Findings Example 2: Random analysis revealed 70% of payments were issued prior to purchase order due date.

As with the targets, specific numbers are essential for findings. The actual percentage or numbers that resulted from the measures are the focus of findings. If there is a small sample or number, that number (the “n”) should be reported as well, since it provides context for the results.

Step 5: Analyze findings and Identify Action Plans for the Next Academic Year

Analyze the data to identify what it means for the entity: (1) Could the results be improved? (2) Is the objective and/or measure useful? (3) What are the next efforts that will best contribute to growing the unit?

At this point, the assessment team who defined the objectives and measures for the assessment plan should reconvene to look at the data. The team should determine by the raw data if the objective’s target level was met, partially met, or not met. You will also need to determine what further action is needed. This is the actual “assessment” part of the assessment process.

Action plans cannot be written unless the team who was involved in creating the assessment plan has analyzed and discussed the findings. Analysis should involve asking a few questions about the results of each measure. What specifically did your assessments show regarding proven strengths or progress you made on outcomes/objectives? What specifically did your assessments show regarding any outcomes/objectives that will require continued attention?

There are other questions you should consider in reflecting on the results and thinking about your next steps. What do you now know about the stated objective and target, in terms of how they will contribute to your unit? Who/what was positively impacted and how? What part of the objective was not met? Why was the target, or why wasn’t the

target, achieved? The most important question: how will you use this information to improve your unit? If you can answer that last question, you are ready to proceed in creating your action plan.

An action plan is the follow-up to the assessment just conducted. Actions must be identified for each objective, even if that action is to replace the objective with another one. Actions should also be as specific as possible, and should show that the team has thought through the results. If you found that conducting a satisfaction survey every 6 months delivered good information and want to do more of them, identify a number or range (2-3, for example) instead of just saying “more”. If you found that surveying students did not reveal useful information, but asking faculty did, indicate that surveys will be conducted with faculty only.

Action plans also require identifying the team or person who will be responsible for the action, so take the time to think through who the appropriate person is to carry out that step.

Since assessment is cyclical, you are getting close to closing the loop. In identifying your next actions, you are essentially designing your next assessment plan.

Step 6: Write Assessment Report

Most of the Assessment Report you need to provide is written, if you’ve documented the previous steps. An Assessment Report at UNCG consists of providing Findings, Analysis, Action Plans and Action Plan Follow-ups.

The one additional piece which starts off the report is the Action Plan Follow-ups. These are the explanations about how you implemented the action plans from last year.

After each stated action plan that you provided the previous year, describe what you did to make improvements. Follow that with what impact that made on your office or program. Finally, explain if you will continue this action, even if you revise it.

Appendix

Administrative Assessment Calendar

For All Organizational Entities (Divisions, Units, and Departments/Offices)

Year 1 Fall Semester:

- Create Mission Statement
- Create Objectives (determine if objectives support higher level entity strategic plans)
- Create Measure(s) for each Objective
- Create annual Target for each Measure
- Complete assessment report

Year 1 Spring Semester:

- Collect findings/results for all measures related to the appropriate objective
- Complete assessment report

Year 2 Fall Semester:

- Create Action Plan for each Objective from Year 1 based on evaluation
- Evaluate current objectives, measures, targets, and findings. Determine need for modification.
- Review/edit Mission Statement
- Review/edit/create Objectives (determine if objectives support higher level entity strategic plans)
- Review/edit/create Measure(s) for each Objective
- Create annual Target for each Measure
- Complete assessment report

Year 2 Spring Semester:

- Review Action Plans
- Create Action Plan Follow-Ups for each Action Plan
- Collect findings/results for all measures related to the appropriate objective
- Complete assessment report

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