Trinity University Protocol for First-Year Assessment Reports
Revised October 2013

This protocol outlines the tasks for first-year program assessment activities, specifies the essential components of each assessment activity, and presents the criteria used by the University Curriculum and Academic Policy (UCAP) Committee in the evaluation of first-year program assessment reports.[1] Program faculty and facilitators should use this document as a guide for constructing reports.

Section I. Tasks for First-Year Program Assessment

The four tasks listed below form the core of assessment efforts for the first year of the assessment cycle. The evaluation criteria in the following section correspond to the specific activities involved in each task.

Task 1: Develop program mission.

Task 2: Develop program goals for this assessment cycle, and define measurable objectives to guide assessment activities.

Task 3: Develop a data collection plan for measuring achievement of objectives defined in Task 2.

Task 4: Draft report to UCAP Committee detailing progress in Tasks 1-3.

Task 1: Develop program mission.

The mission of an academic program is the foundation for its activities and initiatives. It outlines the program's purpose and the contributions it makes. When developing its mission statement, the program should keep in mind the essential elements listed below. It should also keep in mind the need to integrate these elements into a clear and cogent whole.

- The mission statement should ***situate the program within the larger context of its discipline(s).*** Using language accessible to those outside the discipline, the mission statement describes the discipline's scope of enquiry and explains how the program's work fits within this disciplinary framework.
    - Example: "Philosophy explores the ideas, values, principles, and arguments through which we shape our lives and our learning. The discipline includes the study of logic,

[1] This protocol is based on the program assessment tasks developed by the Trinity College Scholastic Standing and Degrees Committee in 1998, but it presents specific expectations for both the programs presenting assessment reports and the UCAP evaluators. It was revised in May 2002 based on an initial pilot of the detailed rubric in 2001-02 and the accreditation criteria issued by Middle States in *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation* (2002). It was reviewed and revised once again in October 2004, in 2005, in 2008, and again in October 2013.

ethics, the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of science, epistemology, and metaphysics. Trinity University's Philosophy Program emphasizes social and political philosophy, ethics, and social justice concerns."

- The mission statement should ***identify the contributions the program makes to all students it serves.*** Programs serve several categories of students, including majors, minors, and students who are taking courses to fulfil general education requirements and to prepare for graduate school or employment. Since student learning outcomes are a key focus of the assessment process, it's important for the mission statement to broadly describe the outcomes the program helps these students achieve.
    - Example: "The Political Science curriculum has been designed to help students develop their potential to become leaders who can act on their faith and values within the larger communities in which they live and work…The program prepares majors for graduate level study, as well as providing skills and knowledge for various careers in public service, such as political campaign work, lobbying and advocacy, survey and other political research positions, and agency and congressional staff work… The program also serves non-majors through its General Education offerings, which encourage student awareness of the responsibilities of citizenship and empower them with knowledge of the political process and their place in it."(Adapted from Political Science Program 2002-3 Assessment Report)

- The mission statement should ***relate the program's purpose to the mission of Trinity University*.** Simply stating that the program supports Trinity's mission is not enough. The mission statement should specify the connections between its aims and those of the university.
    - Example: "The Program in Economics supports the mission of Trinity University. It does so through integrating liberal learning with professional preparation by providing applied courses in Economic science. It also promotes the ethical dimensions of economic analysis by emphasizing the role of socio-economic structures in shaping individuals' decisions, and how those decisions are in turn determinative of the structure itself. Finally, it is committed to the education of women by its emphasis on women's economic lives in its course offerings and pedagogy." (Adapted from Economics Program 2003-4 Assessment Report).

- The mission statement should ***relate to the mission of the program's School/College*.**
    - Example: "The Philosophy Program serves the College of Arts and Sciences' commitment to the liberal arts by offering foundational liberal arts courses that support the College's Foundations for Leadership Curriculum. All CAS students benefit from taking these courses as they hone students' critical thinking skills, initiate students into the practice of engaging in respectful and purposeful discourse, and provide a life-long appreciation of the values that underlie the liberal arts tradition in education." (Adapted from the Philosophy Program 2003-2004 Assessment Report)

- The ***mission statement should lend itself to subdivision into goals***; *and* ***program goals should represent subdivisions of the program's mission statement***. The mission statement articulates a broad vision of the program's purpose. Clear connections between this broad vision and specific program goals will strengthen the coherence of the assessment report.

- Example: "From mission statement: 'Students study history to acquire insight into the ideas and realities that shaped the lives of men and women of earlier eras; and, in so doing, to learn about their own society. In addition to gaining historical awareness, students of history acquire a variety of skills that are fundamental to their success in their future professions. Students of history learn to read critically, think analytically, argue persuasively, and write clearly.' From Goals: '[1] Students will develop an understanding of the rich variety of human experience in diverse times and cultures; [2] Students will recognize how the past shapes the institutions, social structures, and values of our own time; [3] Students will develop analytical and critical thinking abilities, precision in writing, and persuasive argumentation skills.'" (Adapted from History program assessment report 2002-3)

Task 2: Develop program goals for this assessment cycle, and define measurable objectives to guide assessment activities.

- Goals should be ***strategic in nature and limited in number***. Programs typically aspire to pursue many goals. Given time and resource constraints, it isn't possible to effectively assess a multitude of goals in a single assessment cycle. Programs must prioritize, selecting for assessment only those goals that are central to their strategic plan for the next five years. Three to five goals represent a realistic assessment limit.

- Goals should ***specify the expected outcomes for student learning and other key areas*.** Student learning outcomes will be a major focus of every program's goals. Program goals for student learning should identify the knowledge, competencies, behaviors, and skills that students will develop and be able to apply after taking courses. Separate goals should be stated for the various student constituencies the program serves, particularly majors and general education students. As appropriate given its priorities, the program may also specify goals in other areas, such as program development and faculty development.

    - Example: "To accomplish its mission, the Political Science program proposes the following goals: [1] Students will develop an understanding of the operation of political systems; [2] Students will become conversant with major political issues of their day (especially those issues which impact the lives of women), and develop an awareness of civic responsibilities and opportunities; [3] Students will develop an active engagement in the political process; [4] Majors will be prepared to undertake graduate study in related areas or follow relevant professional career paths; [5] Political Science program offerings and requirements will conform with accepted national standards of the major professional association of the discipline.

- Goals should ***be realizable within three years*.** Given the three year timeframe of the assessment cycle, programs should specify goals that are attainable and feasible within that period.

- Program ***objectives should clearly specify means by which goals will be realized*.** In other words, goals express what the program wants to do, while objectives define how the program will do it. While goals are broad, often abstract statements of intentions, objectives are precise,

concrete, and tangible. A goal might describe the general body of knowledge a student is expected to master; the objectives corresponding to that goal would indicate the specific skills that the student will be able to demonstrate.

- Example: "Goal 2: Students will understand and apply basic research methods in psychology.
  - Objective 2.1: Students will demonstrate understanding of the different research methods used in psychology, including their advantages and disadvantages, and the way in which different research designs test various types of hypotheses.
  - Objective 2.2: Students will be able to design and conduct psychological research studies.
  - Objective 2.3: Students will be able to evaluate the validity of conclusions derived from psychological research.
  - Objective 2.4: Students will demonstrate knowledge of ethical treatment of research participants.
  - Objective 2.5: Students will be able to generalize research conclusions appropriately on the basis of particular research methods." (Adapted from Psychology Program assessment report 2002-3)

- Objectives should ***specify expected outcomes that are measurable and empirically verifiable using qualitative and/or quantitative data***. In other words, objectives should be sufficiently concrete and precise to suggest testable hypotheses. Objectives are often best articulated with action verbs that describe behaviour or performance.
  - Examples: Students will be able to **analyze** water, soil, and air samples for biological pollutants; students will demonstrate ability to **work** in teams; students will be able to **convey** information using visual presentation techniques; faculty will **maintain** current knowledge of disciplinary research findings and instructional innovations.

- Objectives should ***fall within the scope of program responsibilities and authority***. It is not useful to set objectives that the program is not in a position to achieve. For instance, a program may wish to strengthen its faculty; but it should not state its objective as "the program will hire new faculty," since final hiring authority is not in program hands. A more realistic objective would be: "The program will develop a faculty hire proposal with a strong rationale and supporting data."

Task 3: Develop a data collection plan for measuring achievement of program objectives.

After defining objectives, programs must design a plan for evaluating their achievement. This requires specifying: [1] the time frame for collecting data; [2] the courses from which data on student learning outcomes will be collected; [3] other relevant sources of data; [4] the instruments that will be used to collect and measure the data; and [5] which data sources and instruments will be used to measure the achievement of each objective. (See appendix for examples of data sources and instruments).

- ***Specify the time frame for collecting data***. This time frame should include at least the second and third semesters of the program assessment process. Programs may choose to extend data

collection further into the past if that would provide valuable evidence about the achievement of their goals.

- Examples: If a goal is to regularize the cycle of course offerings in the program, it would be useful for purposes of comparison to collect data on course offerings for several years previous to the assessment, as well as data on course offerings during the assessment years. If a goal is that students will learn how to interpret texts critically, data collection from prior years would not be necessary.

- ***Specify from which courses data on student learning outcomes will be collected,*** and ***justify the selection of courses***. Programs are not expected to collect data from every course offered during the assessment process. Instead, programs should select courses best suited to yield data that will measure the achievement of the programs' student learning objectives. For example, if one objective is that students will be able to produce clear, concrete, and specific expository writing, it would be appropriate to select writing intensive courses for data collection. If another objective is to ensure student mastery of cumulative and increasingly complex knowledge, it would be appropriate to collect data from capstone courses. Where appropriate to program objectives, data should be collected from the following types of courses:
  - Introductory courses
  - Courses fulfilling Core and/or General Education requirements
  - Required major/minor courses
  - Elective courses
  - Capstone courses
  - Internships, practica, and other field-based learning experiences

- ***Specify what data will be collected from courses,*** Where appropriate to program objectives, data should be collected from the following sources:
  - Student papers and other written assignments
  - Oral reports, presentations, or other non-written projects
  - Laboratory work or other supervised performance-based work
  - Quizzes, tests, and examinations
  - Final course grades
  - Course syllabi
  - Embedded assessments and other direct measures specific to course assessment
  - Indirect measures, such as student surveys and evaluations

- ***Identify other sources of data, including external sources when relevant to program objectives.*** If measuring its objectives requires program-wide data, the program should explain what kinds of data it will collect. For example, if one objective is to maintain sufficient faculty to provide ongoing quality improvement for the program, then data on faculty qualifications and on percentage of courses taught by full-time and adjunct faculty would be relevant. If another objective is to ensure that the program's curriculum conforms to external professional standards, then data from professional organizations would be relevant. More generally, external referents such as cohort institutions, employers, and graduate schools can help the program define external standards against which to evaluate its performance and that of its students. Examples of external data include professional curricular standards (ie, as recommended by the disciplines' professional organizations), employment and graduate school placement rates at cohort

institutions; cohort institution course offerings, major requirements, and pedagogical techniques; and data from employers.

- ***Identify the instruments to be used in assessment.*** An instrument is a tool used to collect and measure data. Examples of instruments include: rubrics for evaluating student work, course evaluations, charts comparing curricular offerings at Trinity and cohort institutions, surveys measuring student and faculty perceptions.

- ***Specify which data sources and instruments will be employed to measure the achievement of each program objective.*** It is not useful for programs to present a laundry list of data sources and instruments . Objectives must be "mated" with specific data sources and instruments.
    - Example: "Objective: Students will understand and construct mathematical proofs of theorems.
        - Assessment instruments: quiz and test blueprints, project grading rubrics, student course evaluations, syllabus analysis
        - Data sources: Math 331, 403, 499 (adapted from Mathematics Program Assessment Report 2005)

- ***Specify multiple data sources and instruments for assessing student learning.*** Course grades are not in themselves sufficient for assessment of student learning outcomes. Grades can be one measure of student achievement, but they don't provide full evidence of the scope of student learning. Learning outcomes should be evaluated by multiple means. For instance, ratings of the writing quality of senior theses could be corroborated by students' grades in composition classes. Programs should also demonstrate that data on student learning outcomes is gathered over time and across situations.

- ***Include both qualitative and quantitative data sources and instruments.*** Quantitative and qualitative data both have their advantages. Because quantitative data are expressed in numbers, they can be compared directly, subjected to statistical analysis, and used to precisely measure changes in performance. Qualitative data can be richer, providing more extensive information related to a particular objective.
    - Examples of quantitative data and instruments: Scale-based student performance evaluations, grade distribution analysis, enrollment data, statistical analysis of exam results, data on success rates on national accreditation exams, student internship data, scalable surveys of alumni and employers, student graduate school attendance and employment rates, test blueprints (a list of key learning outcomes to be assessed on the test, with the number of points to be devoted to each goal).
    - Examples of qualitative data and instruments: prose evaluations of student performance, narrative surveys of alumni and employers, student exit interviews, information from focus group discussions, faculty *curriculum vitae,* course syllabi, student publications, narrative information on course and curriculum development.

Task 4: Draft report and present findings to UCAP Committee.

A draft of the first-year assessment report to the University-Wide Curriculum and Academic Policy Committee is due upon completion.

For Evaluation Criteria, see President's Template

Trinity University Protocol
for Second-Year Assessment Reports
Revised October 2013

This protocol presents the criteria used by the University Curriculum and Academic Policy (UCAP) Committee in the evaluation of second-year program assessment reports.[1] It outlines the tasks to be completed and details essential specific components of each assessment activity. Program faculty and committee mentors should use this document as a guide for constructing their self-study.

Tasks for Second-Year Program Assessment

The three tasks listed below form the core of the assessment efforts for programs engaged in the second year of the program assessment cycle; definitions are provided where appropriate. The numbers in the rubric in the following section correspond to the specific activities involved in each phase of the second year in the assessment process.

Task 1: Implement data collection plan from the First Year Assessment report to measure the achievement of program objectives.

Task 2: Prepare all collected data for interpretation.

Task 3: Draft report presenting all data and findings to UCAP Committee.

Task 1: Implement data collection plan from the First Year Assessment Report.

- Collect data from multiple sources to measure the achievement of program objectives.

- Data collected by means of the instruments should be both quantitative and qualitative and should document the program's performance in meeting its stated objectives.

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[1] This protocol uses the program assessment report evaluation criteria developed by the Trinity College Scholastic Standing and Degrees Committee in 1998, but it develops specific expectations to both the programs presenting assessment reports and the evaluators on the UCAP Committee. It was developed based on the revised accreditation criteria issued by Middle States in *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation* (2002). The UCAP Committee approved this protocol on December 2, 2004. The protocol was reviewed and revised in 2008 and again in October 2013.

- All collected data should be retained by the program at least until feedback is received from the UCAP Committee about the program's final third-year assessment report.

Task 2: Prepare all collected data for interpretation.

- Data should be presented in a format that makes it easy to interpret by using charts, matrices, or tables.

Task 3: Draft report and present findings to UCAP Committee.

- The second-year assessment report to the University Curriculum and Academic Policy Committee is due upon completion. In addition to a narrative overview of the program's assessment activities, this report should include examples of developed instruments and collected data.

Evaluation Criteria of Second-Year Reports: Essential Elements

The rubrics below describe the essential elements of second-year program assessments reports. The UCAP Committee uses these rubrics to evaluate the progress of programs in their second-year assessment activities.

Task 1: Implement data collection plan from the First Year Assessment report.

Evaluation Criteria	Needs Revision	Meets Standard
Qualitative and quantitative data is sufficient to measure the achievement of program objectives.		

Task 2: Prepare all collected data for interpretation.

Evaluation Criteria	Needs Revision	Meets Standard
All data has been collected.		
Data is presented in an easily understandable format by means of charts, matrices, tables, etc.		

Task 3: Draft report and present finding to UCAP Committee

Evaluation Criteria	Needs Revision	Meets Standard
The report summarizes the program's assessment activities.		
The report includes examples of developed instruments and collected data.		

Trinity University Protocol for Third-Year Assessment Reports
Revised October 2013

This protocol outlines the tasks for third-year program assessment activities, specifies the essential components of each assessment activity, and presents the criteria used by the University Curriculum and Academic Policy (UCAP) Committee in the evaluation of third-year program assessment reports.[1] Program faculty and committee program assessment facilitators should use this document as a guide for constructing reports.

Section I: Tasks for Third-Year Program Assessment

The four tasks listed below form the core of the assessment efforts for programs engaged in the first year of the program assessment cycle. The evaluation criteria in the following section correspond to the specific activities involved in each task.

Task 1: Prepare a clear analysis of the data collected in year 2 of program assessment.

Task 2: Draw conclusions from the analyses.

Task 3: Discuss how the results will be used to improve the program.

Task 4: Complete formal report to the UCAP Committee.

The UCAP Committee recognizes that at this point in the assessment process, programs will have unique data assessment plans, methodologies, and critical points of analyses. Nevertheless, the assessment process contains essential elements, as described below.

Task 1: Prepare a clear analysis of the data collected in year two of program assessment.

- The analysis required in the third year must explain how the results of data collection from year 2 are directly tied to the program's plan as articulated in the year 1 report.

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[1] This protocol is based on the program assessment tasks developed by the Trinity College Scholastic Standing and Degrees Committee in 1998, but it presents specific expectations for both the programs presenting assessment reports and the UCAP evaluators. The CAP Committee developed this protocol in 2002-03 based on the revised accreditation criteria issued by Middle States in *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation* (2002). It was reviewed and revised in December 2004, in 2008, and again in October 2013.

- While data collection is a continuous process, the program should base its analysis on data collected through the Fall of Year 3.
- Analyze all quantitative and qualitative data collected and make inferences from the data.

***Task 2: Draw conclusions from the analyses*.**

- Describe to what extent the program's goals and objectives have been achieved. Areas where students in general exceed the program's expectations are just as important as areas where students fall short.
- Identify other notable programmatic results or findings.

Task 3: Discuss how the results will be used to improve the program.

- Articulate a specific plan for implementing program changes based upon the conclusions of the analysis.

- Identify a plan for ongoing data collection. The plan may include revisiting the types of data your program collects.

Task 4: Complete formal report to the CAP Committee.

A draft of the third-year assessment report to the University-Wide Curriculum and Academic Policy Committee is due upon completion. UCAP will assign the report to two peer reviewers from different programs, who will provide UCAP with recommendations.

For Evaluation Criteria, see President's Template