The development of a program assessment plan can appear to be a daunting project of questionable utility. The following model may be of some help in developing your program’s assessment plan. As a general rule, the assessment plans should be kept simple and useful so that they can help faculty realize the goal of improving student learning.

**Part One: Mission and Goals**

In this section of the assessment plan, articulate what the mission of the academic program is, and how that mission is connected to the overall mission of the university.

The following illustrations are taken from the Psychology, Electrical Engineering, and Communication Technologies assessment plans.

The primary goal of the Psychology Department is to prepare students for professional human service roles and/or graduate study in psychology and related fields. Our program fosters (1) the requisite core of knowledge about the discipline, (2) an exposure to applied aspects of the field, and (3) a greater awareness of self, others, and sociocultural influences. This goal serves the institution’s mission of broadening students’ perspectives, increasing their ethical sensitivity, and preparing them for their ultimate roles as competent professionals.

The mission of the Electrical Engineering Program is to provide a quality electrical engineering education with extensive hands-on and laboratory experience that will enable our graduates to practice their profession with proficiency and integrity.

The Communication Technologies program serves UWP students by offering a comprehensive major (60 credits) or a major/minor combination (36/24 credits) through a unique balance among classroom instruction, laboratory activities, and field experiences.

This section may also include the program goals, i.e., student and/or program objectives that are broad and general. The Electrical Engineering and Communications Technology assessment plans offer the following goals.

Educational goals of the Electrical Engineering Program are to graduate engineers who:

1. have the laboratory skills and the ability to use modern analysis and design techniques and state-of-the-art equipment to solve practical engineering problems;
2. have the professional skills to function effectively in the work environment as well as in the community;
3. have a solid understanding of professional and ethical responsibility;
4. have a broad education in order to understand contemporary issues and the impacts of technology on society and the environment;
5. have the ability to engage in life-long learning and recognize its importance.
Communication Technologies Program Goals

1. Prepare undergraduate students for professional careers in one or more program emphases (broadcast production, graphics, journalism, public relations).
2. Provide coursework for programs in Business & Accounting, Agribusiness, Fine Arts, Education, and other programs.
3. Provide elective coursework to satisfy the social science requirements in the General Education program.

Part Two: Student Learning Outcomes for the Major

What are students who graduate from the program expected to know and do? In this section, articulate a list of student learning outcomes for the graduates of the program. Student learning outcomes are:

- more detailed statements derived from the program’s mission and goals;
- cognitive, affective, or behavioral;
- results that are at least somewhat observable and measurable;
- detailed and meaningful.

There is no set number of student learning outcomes that each program is required to offer. Of course, outside accrediting agencies might already require a particular set of student learning outcomes. In programs where that is not the case, I recommend that programs focus on their existing expectations of their students, and then articulate student learning outcomes accordingly.

The Psychology, Electrical Engineering, and Communication Technologies assessment plans state the following student learning outcomes.

Psychology

Student Learning Outcomes Specific to the Discipline:

1. Graduates will demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology.
2. Graduates will understand and apply basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation.
3. Graduates will respect and use critical and creative thinking, skeptical inquiry, and, when possible, the scientific approach to solve problems related to behavior and mental processes.
4. Graduates will understand and apply psychological principles to personal, social, and organizational issues.
5. Graduates will be able to weigh evidence, tolerate ambiguity, act ethically, and reflect other values that are the underpinnings of psychology as a discipline.

Student Learning Outcomes Fulfilled as Part of a Liberal Arts Education and Enhanced in the Psychology Program:

1. Graduates will demonstrate information competence and the ability to use computers and other technology for many purposes.
2. Graduates will be able to communicate effectively in a variety of formats.
3. Graduates will recognize, understand, and respect the complexity of sociocultural and international diversity.
4. Graduates will develop insight into their own and others’ behavior and mental processes and apply effective strategies for self-management and self-improvement.
5. Graduates will emerge from the major with realistic ideas about how to implement their psychological knowledge, skills, and values in occupational pursuits in a variety of settings.
The Electrical Engineering lists thirteen student learning outcomes.

Graduates of the Electrical Engineering program have:

- connected with Goal #1
  - the ability to apply science, engineering science, and mathematics to solve engineering problems;
  - the ability to put their engineering and design skills into practice;
  - the ability to use industrial-quality laboratory equipment and engineering software for analysis, testing, design, and communication;
  - the ability to design systems, components, and processes that satisfy predetermined constraints;
  - the ability to recognize engineering problems, put them in solvable form, and develop and evaluate alternative solutions;

- connected with Goal #2
  - the ability to communicate their ideas and designs clearly orally, in written form, and graphically;
  - the ability to work as members of a team;
  - had the opportunity to develop leadership skills;

- connected with Goal #3
  - understand and apply ethical principles and their role in the engineering profession;

- connected with Goal #4
  - demonstrate knowledge of the humanities and social sciences as they relate to contemporary issues concerning the interaction between technology and society;
  - understand that the products they develop and the methods used to manufacture them can affect the environment;

- connected with Goal #5
  - realize that the practice of electrical engineering is constantly evolving and that engineers must have the ability to acquire new knowledge and skills on their own;
  - have the ability to earn graduate degrees or pursue other continuing education opportunities.

The Communication Technologies assessment plan lists eight student learning outcomes.

As a result of graduating with a bachelor of arts or a bachelor of science degree in Communication Technologies, our students will be able to:

1. demonstrate proficiency in both written and oral communication;
2. discuss the role of mass media in our society;
3. demonstrate knowledge about the concepts, technology, and issues associated with technologies used in communication;
4. effectively capture, process, and edit images;
5. describe and discuss legal concepts, terminology, and issues in communication activities;
6. utilize appropriate technologies and computer software associated with at least one of the four emphases in this program;
7. apply classroom knowledge in the workplace;
8. demonstrate knowledge of ethical decision making.

Part Three: Assessment Tools

The next step is to devise tools for measuring whether or not the student learning outcomes are being met. It is important that a variety of assessment tools be used. While some of these tools may be indirect measures (e.g., exit surveys, alumni surveys, etc.), others should be direct measures (e.g., writing assignments, artistic performances, etc. that are evaluated using a rubric). Grades are generally
not viewed by outside accrediting agencies as a valid assessment tool. It is my own opinion, however, that grades can play a small role in assessing student learning when they are conjoined to other assessment tools.

As an illustration, the following tools are again taken from the Psychology assessment plan.

**Tool 1: Satisfactory Completion of Required Courses in the Major**
Psychology majors must earn a grade of at least a "C" in all courses counted toward their 36 required credits in the major. Included in the major are ten required courses (32 credits) and four elective credits, for a total of 36 credits. Students are also required to pass Elementary Statistics (Math 2430).

**Tool 2: Junior Writing Examination**
The Junior Writing Exam is a graduation requirement for psychology majors. Students must write an essay on a psychology topic of their choice. The content, organization, and mechanics of the essay is then evaluated by faculty members (blind to the identity of the student).

**Tool 3: Behavioral Research Project**
Students majoring in psychology take a sequence of experimental psychology courses in which they learn about research methods, design and conduct a study, and present the results of their study in a seminar or poster format to other students and faculty. This project is evaluated by the instructor and presented on campus at a poster or paper session which is open to the university community.

**Tool 4: Cooperative Field Experience**
The Cooperative Field Experience is a privilege which must be earned by a student. Students must first satisfactorily complete at least 15 credits in psychology, demonstrate academic achievement (a psychology gpa of at least 2.75), and demonstrate sufficient professionalism and psychological-mindedness that the advisor, the CFE coordinator, and the department chair recommend them for the internship.

**Tool 5: Senior Survey**
The department conducts a survey of graduating seniors.

**Tool 6: Senior Focus Group**
The department conducts a focus group with graduating seniors every semester. The focus group questions are created by the faculty each semester, based on trends and issues that suggest themselves during the term. The questions may concern the major sequence or content, advising, opportunities for career education, or extracurricular activities in psychology.

Electrical Engineering uses seven assessment tools:

1. graduating senior exit surveys;
2. alumni surveys;
3. employer surveys;
4. co-op supervisor surveys;
5. course portfolio/objective analysis;
6. FE exam;
7. survey of potential employers.
Communication Technologies uses six assessment tools:

1. graduate placement rate;
2. program specific alumni surveys;
3. senior seminar exit interview and capstone course;
4. WSUP disc jockey exam;
5. employer evaluations of interns;
6. employer evaluation of internship program.

Based on the input from various UWP governance bodies (e.g., Academic Planning Council, Assessment Oversight Committee) and outside accrediting agencies, it is recommended that each assessment plan include a chart/grid that connects the multiple assessment tools to the student learning outcomes.

The following illustration is taken from the Psychology assessment plan.

Tools Measuring Attainment of Student Learning Outcomes (SLO). An X indicates that, in the judgment of the Psychology Department, the tool measures progress toward the goal indicated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool 1: Satisfactory Completion of Required Courses in the Major</th>
<th>Tool 2: Junior Writing Exam</th>
<th>Tool 3: Cooperative Field Experience</th>
<th>Tool 4: Behavioral Research Project</th>
<th>Tool 5: Senior Survey</th>
<th>Tool 6: Senior Focus Group</th>
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<tr>
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The Electrical Engineering assessment plan includes the following chart.

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<th>c</th>
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If you have any questions about developing an assessment plan, please contact Shane Drefcinski (drefcins@uwplatt.edu) or George Smith, Chair of the Assessment Oversight Committee (smith@uwplatt.edu).