

Module 7: Navigating the UF Assessment System

by Dr. Tim Brophy

Hello, my name is Tim Brophy, Director of Institutional Assessment here at the University of Florida. Welcome to Module 7, A Passport to Great Teaching. In this module I'm going to show you how to navigate the University of Florida's assessment system. Now our goal for this module is simply to describe and explain the components of the system and to show you how to work your way through them.

So first we need to define what an assessment system is. Well, at the University of Florida, it's basically the coordinated and carefully designed set of process and tools that our university accreditation coordinators, faculty, and staff, and administration use to submit, review, and store, and access their academic assessment plans and academic data reports. So reliability and validity have been built into this process. Throughout the process, we'll talk a little bit about that as we go through today's demonstration or today's talk. And also, we want to be sure in that process ensure data integrity and that the inferences that are being made to institutional effectiveness are appropriate.

So let's talk now about the system processes. First of all is communication. It's really critical to what we do. Because we're so large and so diverse, which is one of our strengths, but it's also a challenge for communication. So each of our colleges, our 16 colleges, our 4 senior vice presidential units, our 10 vice presidential units, our libraries, the graduate school, the Florida Museum of Natural History, all have individuals appointed in those units as the assessment and accreditation coordinators. And they're the point of contact for me and my office to you in your area. So you want to be sure that you contact them with any questions or concerns you have. They can usually answer those. Now this group meets at least once a semester to go over updates and to provide them new information, and schedules, and timelines, and so forth that we have for accreditation purposes. So they are aware of what's going on at all times. So that's how that works.

Now, faculty oversight is critical to what we do in our assessment system. We do have this institution level academic assessment committee. It is a joint senate committee. There are four members elected by the Senate, four members appointed by the president of the University. There's usually a student and there are several liaisons on the committee, as well. And you can see that list of names when you go to the Academic Assessment Committee website on the institutional Assessment web pages.

Their duties. Well, they review and approve academic assessment plans. They also include student learning outcomes in their review. They really pay close attention to those. They also will help to improve the efficiency of the institutional assessment process. And they're also the primary organizers and drivers of the Annual Assessment Conference that we have here at the University.

So what does the committee review? Well, they do the following. They really look hard at the program goals and student learning outcomes to ensure that they follow our guidelines to the extent that they can follow them. And then also, they're careful to be sure that our outcomes aren't confused with outputs. And we know from previous modules that difference. And then they also help check to be sure the program goals and student learning outcomes are different in their orientation and their nature and the methodologies that are used. They also check for outcome measurability and the potential to yield valid results for the student learning outcome and the goal that they're designed to measure.

They also look for and review the validity arguments when faculty use third-party assessments as their SLO measures. And you can read about that also on our academic assessment web page when you go to the assessment website. And then they also review assessment and curriculum maps to be sure that they reflect a logical progression and sequence of introducing, reinforcing, and assessing the outcomes. As well as to ensure that the curriculum and assessment map is updated and moves far into the future as to when you plan to measure your outcomes and goals.

So what do you do when you want to enter a new plan or modify an existing one? Well, to initiate a new plan, you need to go to the approval process. And in that approval process page, approval.ufl.edu, you simply go to Start New Request and you follow the instructions under the ALC, which stands for Academic Learning Compacts slash AAP, which stands for Academic Assessment Plan, and you follow the appropriate forms. And all the resources for developing a new plan are on our planning page of the academic assessment web page, which is right here. So you can see that link and you can click on that from the copy of the PowerPoint that's associated with this video.

The Academic Assessment Plan has several components. Our accreditor, SACSCOC, is very interested in that we align our missions of all of our programs with the department, college, and the university missions. Also, the plans contain student learning outcomes, as well as those curriculum and assessment maps that I chose for the academic assessment committee reviews.

Then there is an assessment cycle. That is, you have up to three years to review all of your student learning outcomes in your program. Most faculty do this every year, but you could take up to three years if there are a lot of these outcomes that you need to approach. So you have up to three years to do that. And the cycle is where you show that. You describe the methods and procedures you're going to use to measure each outcome and each goal. And then there is an assessment oversight section where you list the individuals in the college, or in the unit, or in the program that are primarily responsible for these processes and this information, so that if we need to contact them, we can do that.

So if you want to modify an existing plan, again, all modifications, as well as new plans, need to be approved by the academic assessment committee. That's our institutional faculty oversight group. Now to initiate that process, again, you go to the approval system,

and you go to Start New Request. And you submit the appropriate forms for modifying a plan, not creating a new one.

So I review, as director, the initial request for modifications. If they meet my initial review, then I move them right on to the academic assessment committee, and they will take a look at this at their very next meeting, whenever that is scheduled. It's always on the second Tuesday of every month. Then if it does not meet initial review, I send it back through the system. And it gets fixed and it comes back to me. And then we-- the process just kind of goes back and forth. And I'll show you how that process works in just a moment. So what the academic assessment committee does then is they review the change or the new plan and they take action at their next committee meeting. And then there are several things that they can do, that they choose to do when they make a decision.

So here's the approval process. First of all, it begins with the program, where the program entry into the approval system begins. Then it moves on to the college level, and the college committee or the college academic assessment coordinator is going to be the one who reviews that and moves it onto the academic assessment committee. I told you then, at that point, I will review it. If it looks like it's ready for the academic assessment committee to review without issue, then I will forward it on to the committee to be reviewed.

Otherwise, I will send it back for any modifications that need to be made. Once it leaves the academic assessment committee, it moves on to the university curriculum committee where it is an information item for them to review. They always have, though, the option to question or ask questions about any decision the academic assessment committee has made. And then it moves on to student academic support system where it will be-- depending on the level of the program, undergraduate, graduate, professional-- it will be placed into the degree audit system and also the catalog will be updated with any revised SLOs or assessment methods, or any new curriculum or assessment maps.

And they go linearly either direction. So anytime along either path, it can be-- the request can be moved forward or it can be moved backward. It's not a circular path at all. It's always linear, either direction.

So what are the system outputs? Well, we give notifications. We let the program leaders know, the submitters of the academic assessment requests, receive an automated email automatically when there is an action taken. It's any kind of action. It could be an approval. It could be a conditional approval. It could be a denial. Could be tabled or whatever. So you get an email about that.

Here are the options. Again, approval. I can write comments, for example, if somebody submits something to be reviewed by the committee, I will often let them know that it will be reviewed at the next committee meeting, and when that date is, and that they're welcome to attend that meeting. A conditional approval simply means that the committee

is pretty happy with everything. And once the condition is met for approval, I can go in and make an executive approval for that.

The tabling, we rarely use. We never really run out of time at a meeting to not get to something. That's the only reason we would ever table something to the next meeting, if we didn't get to it in the meeting that we're conducting. We also recycle items. Recycle simply means we send it back for some major modifications before the academic assessment committee can actually approve it. Then a denial is rare. Usually we only deny something if it's been entered twice. We'll deny one of the two entries so that we're only tracking one of them.

And then we also provide constructive feedback. We do provide this feedback on all the data reports via email or in the comments section of the academic approval system. When we request modifications, we try to be as specific as possible about what it is the committee had a question about. And then we do allow two to four weeks for modifications to be completed.

And then the most common request we have basically are to report improvement actions as a decision made based on review results in the past tense, rather than the decision you're going-- rather than something you're going to do in the future. We need it to be stated in the past tense, like we decided to do this based on our review of results. So we do ask for all of these future tense phrases to be removed and any improvement actions that are discussed in the academic data reports.

So that's our system. Again, I'm Tim Brophy, the Director of Institutional Assessment. There is all the information you need to reach me, and you can also find the list of academic assessment coordinators on our assessment website, as well. And there is a reference to a chapter I have published recently on our assessment system. You're welcome to review that at your convenience.

