

# Departmental Assessment 2010-2018

Bill Altermatt, Institutional Research & Assessment



# Goals

1. Summarize report to ECC on Institutional Learning Outcome (ILO) #2: Substantial knowledge of a field of study
2. Suggestions for improving departmental assessment



In 2. Demonstrate substantial knowledge of a field of study and the modes of inquiry or methodologies pertinent to that field.

*“This learning outcome is achieved through our majors and programs and so will be assessed primarily through individual department/ program assessment.”*

*(Assessment Plan Detail, Dean of the College webpage)*



# Ideally, demonstrating substantial knowledge would involve:

1. Gathering evidence related to a learning outcome
2. Based on direct evidence of student performance
3. Compared to a standard of meeting or not meeting expectations
4. Showing that a majority of students meet expectations
5. For each learning outcome in a major



# 1. Gathering evidence related to a learning outcome

- Some assessment reports focused on concerns related to student preparation for comps or challenges in staffing. These are important issues but may be better reserved for the annual department report to the Dean's Office.
- If you sorted all the departments by the percentage of their learning outcomes for which they had gathered evidence, the median department has gathered evidence for **79%** of its learning outcomes.



## 2. Based on direct evidence of student performance

- **Direct evidence** involves directly observing student performance: an essay, a math problem, playing an instrument, dancing.
- **Indirect evidence** typically involves survey responses: students' perceptions of much they have learned.
- The median department gathered direct evidence for **71%** of its learning outcomes.



### 3. Compared to a standard of meeting or not meeting expectations

- Consider using existing assignments that permit clear judgments about students meeting or not meeting expectations.
- Common strategy: Rubric that includes a clear demarcation between satisfactory and unsatisfactory (often between 2 and 3 on a 5-point scale).
- Median department did this for **62%** of learning outcomes



## 4. Showing that a majority of students meet expectations

- Many assessment reports described a task given to students, but did not provide any detail about the results.
- Common strategy: Rubric with a count of the number of students receiving each score.
- Median department did this for **57%** of learning outcomes

E.g., 6 students' comps papers:

	Did not meet	Met	Exceeded
Historical context of problem	1	3	2
Use of appropriate methods	0	4	2
Sources	2	3	1



# Suggestions for improving assessment

1. Revise learning outcomes so they are manageable (<8) and align with current priorities. If few majors, consider having some learning objectives that target higher-enrollment classes.
2. Cycle over learning outcomes. Don't get stuck.
3. Surveys are useful, but also collect direct evidence.
4. Consider using rubrics and existing assignments.
5. Identify areas for improvement.
6. Make improvements and then reflect on their effectiveness.