

ASSESSMENT PLANNING AND REPORTING FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

A GUIDE FOR CO-CURRICULAR AND ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

Continuous improvement of programs and services is at the heart of what co-curricular and

Co-Curricular and Administrative Units: Units that constitute UHD's support ecosystem and operational backbone by providing programs, services, and support for students, faculty, and staff. (e.g., Library, Human Resources, Facilities management, IT, 3SL units, etc.).

administrative units do at UHD, and this guide is here to make the thinking and decision-making behind this work explicit. It defines continuous improvement and provides a structured way to understand how it unfolds through inquiry, evidence, and action. It also explains how this work is documented through unit-level assessment plans and annual assessment reports. These documents (plans

and reports) are presented not as isolated artifacts, but as connected components that form a coherent picture of how units learn from evidence and respond to it.

How to Use this Guide: Begin by reviewing the overview on pages 1-6 to understand key concepts and expectations. Refer to the Appendices for FAQs that provide detailed explanations and examples.

The goals of this guide are to:

- Promote a shared understanding of what continuous improvement means and how co-curricular and administrative units are expected to engage in it through assessment, in alignment with expectations established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).
- Provide guidance to help units develop strong and actionable assessment plans and meaningful assessment reports

Continuous Improvement: What Is It and Why Does it Matter?

Continuous improvement is an intentional cycle of inquiry in which co-curricular and administrative units identify and prioritize an area for improvement, inquiry, or strategic priority, collect and analyze relevant assessment data, and make targeted improvements based on the results. The process is iterative as 'continuous' improvement requires ongoing evaluation and adjustment, rather than a one-off effort. What is learned from each round of inquiry guides next steps.

The typical inquiry cycle includes the following steps:

1. **Select the focus of inquiry.** What do you want to understand about the quality and impact of your unit's work? To guide this focus, hone in on the unit's mission statement, the

contributions it makes to institutional or divisional strategic priorities, and the goals it intends to accomplish.

2. **Identify the outcome** that best represents that focus.
3. **Determine how evidence will be gathered and analyzed.**
4. **Establish the target.** What is the level of aspirational performance that the unit is striving to achieve?
5. **Collect data and report results.**
6. **Analyze and learn from the results.** Analysis should lead to interpretation and hypotheses about the underlying factors contributing to both areas of strength and areas where performance falls short of expectations.
7. **Identify targeted improvements** based on analysis of the results.
8. **Implement those improvements.**

The cycle does not end at this point. It continues as programs:

9. **Examine the same focus and related evidence** to deepen understanding, evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken, and determine if other adjustments need to be made.
10. **Use what is learned to guide next steps.**

Why Continuous Improvement Matters?

Continuous improvement is key to institutional effectiveness. Additionally, thoughtful engagement in this work and its documentation fulfills expectations established by SACSCOC. One of the fundamental characteristics of SACSCOC accreditation is an institutional commitment to the concept of quality enhancement through continuous assessment and improvement. In the context of reaffirmation, sustained, ongoing engagement in this work is required.

The specific SACSCOC standards informing this guide are Standards 8.2.c and 7.3. These standards frame assessment as an ongoing process in which units identify meaningful outcomes, examine the extent to which those outcomes are achieved, and use analysis of results to guide improvement.

At its core, this work is not about proving that the unit is effective; it is about using data to understand practice and improve it.

For information on how assessment at UHD is structured and scoped in alignment with SACSCOC standards, [refer to this document](#).

To learn more about the SACSCOC requirements, refer to the [Accrediting Standards - SACSCOC](#)

How Is Continuous Improvement of Student Learning Documented at UHD?

At UHD, continuous improvement is documented through each unit's **Assessment Plan** and **Annual Assessment Report**. The table below summarizes the key information expected in each.

Assessment Plan	Assessment Report
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The outcomes included in the plan• Assessment methods for each outcome• Targets for each outcome• Assessment timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implemented changes since the previous report for the same outcome• Summary of results for the current assessment• Analysis and interpretation of the results• Reflection on the influence of any actions implemented since the previous assessment• Use of results• Assessment Plan Revisions (if any)

Assessment Plan

Overview of assessment plan components is provided below. For more detailed guidance, see Appendix A – Assessment Plan-Related FAQs.

- **The outcomes included in the plan:** (*Guiding question: What do we want to examine?*). Assessment plans identify the outcomes units commit to assessing. Outcomes are statements that describe the results a unit intends to achieve through its activities, services, or processes. They must be specific and measurable and focus on the quality and impact of the unit's work and/or components of the strategic plan, as opposed to completion of tasks. Units identify the outcomes to be included in the plan through unit-level conversation. Units determine how many outcomes to include in their assessment plans. While there is no external mandate prescribing a specific number, plans should include multiple outcomes that meaningfully represent the unit's current priorities.
- **Assessment methods:** (*Guiding question: Where will the evidence come from? How will it be analyzed?*). Assessment methods describe the sources of evidence used to assess outcomes and how that evidence will be analyzed to determine whether the targets have been met. There is no external mandate prescribing a specific number of assessment methods per outcome. What matters is alignment. Methods should be intentionally selected to produce meaningful, relevant evidence that allows the unit to examine its outcomes in credible ways. A single, well-aligned method may be sufficient for each outcome. Additional methods should be included only when they provide meaningful and complementary evidence that deepens analysis and informs improvement. Assessment methods should be described with sufficient clarity to make the assessment plan actionable.
- **Targets for each method:** (*Guiding question: What is the level of aspirational performance that we are striving to achieve?*). Targets provide a reference point that helps units interpret results and guide improvement. Targets should be improvement-oriented rather than success-oriented. Their purpose is not to prove that the unit is performing well, but to provide a meaningful point

of comparison between current and desired/aspirational performance so that opportunities for improvement can be identified.

- **Assessment timeline:** (*Guiding question: When and how often will we examine each outcome?*). With the revision of policy PS 03.A.39, UHD is transitioning from a six-year to a three-year assessment timeline. This change aligns the timeline with assessment practices used by educational programs across the four colleges and responds to feedback from the SACSCOC site visit. Under the revised policy, units will determine how often each outcome is examined within the three year period, provided that each outcome is assessed and reassessed during that timeframe.

Assessment Report

Once the assessment plan is implemented and data are gathered, units document their observations, what they learned, and what they plan to do next. This work happens in the assessment report. Overview of assessment report components is provided below. For more detailed guidance, see Appendix B: Assessment Report-Related FAQs.

- **Implemented changes since the previous report for the same outcome:** Assessment reporting at UHD begins with a look back at the previous assessment of the same outcome, if it has been assessed before. Units review the report from that time, identify the improvements that were proposed, and then indicate in this section which of those previously proposed improvements were actually implemented. The purpose is to demonstrate that assessment results are used to make intentional, data-informed improvements to processes, services, or practices. Not all planned changes from the previous assessment may have been enacted. In that case, units should acknowledge this transparently and provide a rationale as to what may have affected follow-through. If the outcome is being assessed for the first time, this section should simply state that this is the first assessment of the outcome, and therefore no prior actions exist to report.
- **Summary of results:** In this section, units are expected to provide an objective summary of the findings for the outcomes assessed. An objective summary describes what the data show and whether the target was met or not.
- **Analysis and interpretation of the results:** This is where the units are expected to move beyond summarizing results to interpreting what the findings may mean. Interpretation involves looking beneath the surface of the data and exploring potential factors that may have contributed to the observed findings. Simply repeating or copying the summary of results in this section does not constitute interpretation. Interpretation is essential because plans for improvement described later in the report should be grounded in the insights developed here.
- **Reflection on the influence of any actions implemented since the previous assessment:** This section goes hand in hand with the *Implemented changes since the previous report for the same outcome* section. While that earlier section documents what actions (if any) were actually carried out since the prior assessment of the outcome, this section prompts programs to reflect on whether those actions appear to have moved the needle, even in small ways. This reflection involves noting whether previously implemented changes appear to have helped or not, or

whether their impact is not yet evident. If planned actions were not implemented, there may be nothing to discuss beyond acknowledging that.

- **Use of results:** The report concludes by identifying improvement actions the unit plans to take in response to the findings. This section is where assessment demonstrates its value: Units describe the specific steps they will take based on analysis of the results.
- **Assessment Plan Revisions:** The conclusion of reporting is a decision point for units. This is where they determine whether the assessment plan should be continued as is, refined, or redesigned. See Appendix C: From Assessment reporting to Plan Updates for guidance on these determinations.

Conditions that Support Continuous Improvement

The following conditions support meaningful engagement in this work and its sustained implementation over time:

- Unit culture that values collaboration, inquiry, and openness to improve programs, services, and practices.
- A learning mindset that views improvement as an ongoing process of inquiry.
- Leadership support at the unit, division, and institutional levels. This includes reinforcing the importance of assessment, encouraging thoughtful engagement with results, and supporting units in implementing improvements.
- Adequate resources (including time, tools and professional learning) to support meaningful engagement in this work.
- Clear guidance on institutional expectations.
- Foundational understanding of what continuous improvement is.
- Basic assessment and data literacy skills.
- Data that are valid and aligned with the outcomes.
- Quality assurance and feedback processes for plans and reports.
- Mechanisms for acting on results and promised improvements. Continuous improvement requires structures that ensure assessment results lead to action.

Available Resources

Resources are available to support units in their continuous improvement efforts through assessment. These supports include learning events, coaching/consultation, and practical tools.

Learning events are offered through workshops/sessions provided by the Office of Assessment and Accreditation (OAA). In addition, units may engage in one-on-one consultations with assessment staff for guidance as they design assessment plans and create reports. Practical tools and guidance materials are also available. For example:

- The Assessment Plan Rubric and Feedback tool
- The Assessment Report Rubric and Feedback tool

These tools are designed to help units self-assess the quality of their assessment plans and reports and identify opportunities for refinement. These and other resources are available on Office of Assessment and Accreditation's [Assessment Resources](#) page.

APPENDIX A - ASSESSMENT PLAN-RELATED FAQs

The FAQs are listed thematically first, followed by detailed responses in the sections that follow.

Questions about Roles and Responsibilities in Assessment Planning

1. Who is responsible for developing an assessment plan for a unit?
2. What structures and supports are in place to guide the development of the assessment plan?

Questions about Developing Outcomes

3. Where should units begin when developing an assessment plan?
4. What are the ground rules for writing outcomes?
5. What do outcomes for co-curricular and administrative units typically focus on?
6. Do co-curricular and administrative units need to include learning outcomes in their plans?
7. How many outcomes should be included in an assessment plan?
8. Are units expected to assess outcomes separately for different student populations or modes of delivery?

Questions about Assessment Methods

9. What is an assessment method?
10. How many assessment methods should be used for each outcome in an assessment plan?
11. What type of assessment methods should be used?
12. How should a unit select assessment methods?
13. How much detail should be included when describing assessment methods?
14. If an outcome applies to multiple populations or delivery contexts, how should the method be described?

Questions about Targets

15. What are targets?
16. Why use the term *target* rather than *success criterion*?
17. What are the expectations for setting targets?
18. If aspirational targets are set, does not meeting them put a unit at risk?
19. How should units establish targets for their outcomes?

Questions about Assessment Timeline/Schedule

20. What is the institutional assessment schedule at UHD?

Questions about the Distribution of Outcomes in an Assessment Plan

21. Are units expected to assess every outcome in the assessment plan every year?
22. How many outcomes are units expected to assess each year?
23. Do units have flexibility in how they schedule outcome assessment within the three-year timeline?

Questions about Reassessing Outcomes

24. How important is it to take a second look at an outcome within a plan (i.e., assess and reassess)?
25. Why is there a focus on repeating the assessment of an outcome?
26. Are units expected to demonstrate improved results every time an outcome is reassessed?

Questions about What an Assessment Plan Looks Like

27. What should an assessment plan look like? Is there a template to follow?

Roles and Responsibilities in Assessment Planning

1. Who is responsible for developing an assessment plan for a unit?

Assessment planning is not the responsibility of a single individual; it is a collaborative process grounded in the collective expertise of the unit.

While there is no single individual solely responsible for designing the assessment plan, having a designated person to document it in the university's assessment system (Nuventive) is helpful.

2. What structures and supports are in place to guide the development of the assessment plan?

- **VPs (or their designee):** Ensure that units within their divisions have assessment plans in place and that these plans align with divisional/institutional priorities as well as institutional expectations for meaningful assessment.
- **Assessment Staff (college-based and the Office of Assessment and Accreditation):** Provide guidance, feedback, and support to strengthen clarity, alignment, and quality of assessment plans.

Developing Outcomes

3. Where should units begin when developing an assessment plan?

There are multiple entry points to developing an assessment plan. Units may begin with any of the following:

Starting from the mission	Asking about what the unit is trying to accomplish and what matters most: How well are we delivering on what we say we value most?
Starting from a perceived or observed weakness	Identifying areas where things can be improved: Where are things not working as intended? Where can we go from good to great?
Starting from valued but unexamined work	Identifying aspects of work that are valued but not yet examined through data: What do we believe is important, but have never systematically looked at through data?
Starting from strategic priorities	Considering the university's or division's strategic plans and identifying the components of those plans to which the unit contributes. The assessment plan can serve as a structured way to track strategic plan outcomes the unit is responsible for. How does our work contribute to broader goals, and how can we track that contribution meaningfully?

What this looks like in practice:

The examples below (from Accounts Payable Office) illustrate how these different entry points translate into practice, showing how a unit can begin from multiple entry points – whether grounded in mission,

prompted by observed/perceived weaknesses, driven by curiosity about unexamined aspects of practice, or aligned with strategic priorities.

- a) Grounded in our mission to provide timely financial operations, we want to understand the timeliness of our vendor payments. Specifically, we want to understand the time it takes to process vendor payments, from invoice receipt to payment issuance. (Mission aligned inquiry).
- b) We are noticing that a number of payments are delayed due to incomplete and inaccurate invoice submissions. Reducing these delays is a priority for improvement. (Observed gap/weakness)
- c) We receive a high volume of vendor inquiries, but we have not really looked at this issue from a data standpoint. So, we are wondering what types of vendor inquiries we are receiving and how frequently they occur. (Unexamined area)
- d) As part of UHD's strategic priority of sustainable operations, our unit contributes to the strategic plan outcome related to efficient payment services. We want to track this outcome in our plan.

When unit-level dialogue generates multiple lines of inquiry, the next step is to determine which ones to prioritize. Once a line of inquiry is selected, translate it into an outcome for assessment

4. What are the ground rules for writing outcomes?

There are four things to be mindful about:

1. Outcomes are the ultimate, hoped-for end results you envision for your unit. Therefore, they must be results-oriented. Examples:
 - Campus stakeholders who submit a service ticket and receive service will be satisfied with the timelines and quality of the service provided. (IT)
 - By their third year, students will have completed at least 80% of their degree requirements (Advising)
 - Students who complete the 8-Step Student Success program will demonstrate improved academic standing, as evidenced by an increase of at least 0.25 in their cumulative GPA within the same semester in which they began and completed the program. (Gator Success Program)
 - Increase the proportion of e-form submissions that are accurate (Provost Business Office)
2. Outcomes must not be framed as activities or tasks (e.g., what the unit does). Each example provided below is task-focused and should be avoided, as they describe what the unit does rather than the results or impact of that work.
 - Adult programs will meet the needs of adult learners
 - The office will process vendor payments
 - Financial Aid Office will provide workshops on financial literacy
 - Career Services will offer resume review sessions
 - Advising will implement a new advising model
 - HR will develop a new onboarding process for staff

- Staff will use data to inform decisions
3. Outcomes must not be broad/vague, double- or multiple-barreled. Examples:
 - Student workers will provide excellent customer service, maintain a welcoming and safe environment, and apply an understanding of UHD policies and procedures and critical thinking skills to determine appropriate courses of action. (Multiple-barreled)
 - Upward Bound seniors will successfully navigate the college admissions and financial aid process (too broad/vague, not specific)
 - Career Center will enhance partnerships employers (vague, not specific)
 4. Outcomes must be measurable, meaning the intended result can be observed or evaluated.

Examples:

 - The average time for students to receive an advising response will decrease from 72 hours to 48 hours (measurable because response time data can be collected and analyzed).
 - The percentage of invoice processes without error will increase from 80% to 90% (measurable because errors can be tracked and compared against total volume).
 - At least 90% of committee decisions will be communicated to stakeholders within 5 business days (measurable because communication dates can be tracked against decision dates).

5. What do outcomes for co-curricular and administrative units typically focus on?

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Effectiveness of programs/services (e.g., whether a service leads to improved retention, graduation, etc.).
- Quality of service (e.g., energy usage, response times, error rates, turnaround times)
- User experience and satisfaction (e.g., satisfaction ratings, ease of use)
- Usage of programs/services (e.g., uptake of resources, participation rates)
- Monetary targets (fund-raising, grant submissions)
- Cost effectiveness
- Needs assessment of users
- Complying with standards
- Benchmarking with other institutions
- Strategic plan accomplishments

6. Do co-curricular and administrative units need to include learning outcomes in their plans?

For units with direct instructional or educational responsibilities, learning outcomes may be appropriate, but they are not required. When included, these outcomes should focus on the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes participants are expected to attain as a result of the experience.

Units without a clear instructional role should instead focus on outcomes related to the effectiveness, quality, or impact of their services or operations.

7. How many outcomes should be included in an assessment plan?

An assessment plan includes multiple outcomes. The term ‘multiple’ means that an assessment plan should not rely on a single outcome alone.

SACSCOC does not mandate a specific number of outcomes in an assessment plan. As such, units should include in their plans a meaningful and manageable number of outcomes to assess. In some cases, two may be sufficient, while in others, units may choose to include more based on their scope and priorities. A higher number of outcomes does not strengthen an assessment plan.

8. Are units expected to assess outcomes separately for different student populations or modes of delivery?

When programs or services are delivered across different student populations (e.g., undergraduate and graduate) or modes of delivery (e.g., on-campus, off-campus, online), those differences matter for assessment, and SACSCOC expects units to explicitly address how their assessment activities take these different populations and modalities into account.

What does this mean for assessment planning? If a unit wants to assess one of its programs/services that is provided to different student populations (e.g., FTIC and transfer) or across different delivery modalities (e.g., on-campus and off-campus), it is not necessary to create separate outcomes for each group or modality/context. A single outcome may be used, provided the assessment design allows differences across groups/modalities to be examined. (See FAQ 14)

Assessment Methods

9. What is an assessment method?

An assessment method specifies both the source of evidence and the process used to evaluate student learning.

10. How many assessment methods should be used for each outcome in an assessment plan?

There is no prescribed number of assessment methods required for each outcome. A single method may be sufficient when it directly aligns with the outcome and provides meaningful evidence.

11. What type of assessment methods should be used?

- **Direct Methods:** These are measures that provide observable evidence of the outcome itself. They assess the result directly, rather than relying on perceptions, opinions, or proxies.
 - For learning outcomes, direct methods involve evaluating student work or performance (e.g., tests, projects, assignments) to determine what a stakeholder (student, staff, faculty) knows, gains, or can do from the unit’s services, programs, or activities.

- For other types of outcomes, direct methods capture observable, verifiable evidence of the thing that is the focus of assessment. For example, if the focus of assessment is to evaluate cost effectiveness, the direct method may be examining the cost per completed transaction. Or if the focus of assessment is to evaluate timeliness, the direct method may involve examining the percentage of work completed within established timeframes.
- **Indirect Methods:** Involves gathering data that reflects perceptions, satisfaction, and reflections. (e.g., surveys, focus groups).

12. How should a unit select assessment methods?

Assessment methods should be selected based on their alignment with the outcome and their ability to provide meaningful evidence of the result. Units should choose methods that directly capture the outcome, are feasible to implement, and yield information that can support interpretation and decision-making.

13. How much detail should be included when describing assessment methods?

Assessment methods should be described with enough detail to make the plan actionable. Someone inheriting the plan should be able to understand how the evidence will be collected and evaluated without needing additional clarification. See examples below.

Do This	Don't Do This
<p>Outcome: Increase the % of contracts submitted on or before the required submission deadline</p> <hr/> <p>Method: Analyze contract submissions received.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pull all contract submissions for the reporting year and determine the total number. 2. Classify each submission as on time or late. For each contract, compare the submission date to the required submission deadline. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. On time: submitted on or before the required deadline b. Late: submitted after the required deadline 3. Calculate the % of submissions that are on time and compare this rate to the target. 	<p>Outcome: Increase the % of contracts submitted on or before the required submission deadline</p> <hr/> <p>Method: We will track the number of contracts received on a spreadsheet</p>

Do This	Don't Do This
<p>Outcome: At least 80% of students will report that advising sessions were helpful</p>	<p>Outcome: At least 80% of students will report that advising sessions were helpful</p>
<p>Method: At the end of each fall and spring semesters, all students who received at least one advising session will be invited via email to complete a survey. The survey will include 10 questions, but for the purposes of this assessment, we will focus on Question 4, “The advising sessions were helpful in addressing my needs.” Responses will be collected on a 5-point scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). For each semester, the percentage of respondents selecting “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” will be calculated. For annual reporting, a combined percentage across both semesters will be calculated using total responses. And this result will be evaluated against the 80% target. Semester-level results will be reviewed alongside the annual results to identify variation and inform improvement.</p>	<p>Method: Survey</p>

14. If an outcome applies to multiple populations or delivery contexts, how should the method be described?

This question applies to units whose programs or services are delivered across different student populations (e.g., undergraduate vs graduate, FTIC vs transfer, etc) or modes of delivery (e.g., on-campus, off-campus, online), as explained in FAQ 8 above.

Where appropriate, the method description for the outcome should indicate how different populations or service delivery contexts will be considered in the collection and analysis of data. Designing for this at the planning stage ensures that differences are visible in the results.

Assume the outcome is: At least 80% of students will report that advising sessions were helpful

Assume students served through advising include undergraduate and graduate students.

Then the method description can look like this (see the part bolded):

At the end of each fall and spring semesters, all students (**grad and undergrad**) who received at least one advising session will be invited via email to complete a survey. The survey will include 10 questions, but for the purposes of this assessment, we will focus on Question 4, “The advising sessions were helpful in addressing my needs.” Responses will be collected on a 5-point scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). For each

semester, the percentage of respondents selecting “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” will be calculated. **Results will be disaggregated by student population (undergraduate and graduate).**

See FAQ 5 in the next Appendix to understand how this will look like in your reports.

Targets

15. What are targets?

Targets indicate the levels of aspirational performance that the unit is striving to achieve.

16. Why use the term *target* rather than *success criterion*?

The phrase *success criterion* might lead units to frame assessment around meeting minimum levels of achievement – levels below which the unit does not want to fall. In contrast, the term *target* emphasizes a goal that units strive toward.

17. What are the expectations for setting targets?

Targets should be:

- Rigorous or aspirational (i.e., set at a level that may be challenging to reach or designed to go from good to great, rather than maintaining the status quo) yet realistic.
- Improvement-oriented, rather than success-oriented (see next question for details).
- Informed by baseline data (not arbitrarily developed).
- Clearly written and easy to understand (not convoluted with “either/or” “both/and” statements).

18. If aspirational targets are set, does not meeting them put a unit at risk?

No. Not meeting a target does not place a unit at risk. The purpose of assessment is not to prove success. Rather, the purpose is to identify opportunities to continuously improve. From a continuous improvement perspective, what matters most is how units engage with the assessment data - whether they thoughtfully interpret the results and use those insights to guide improvements.

19. How should units establish targets for their outcomes?

Targets should be established using baseline data when appropriate and available. Baseline data provide a starting point that allows units to set realistic, informed expectations for performance and improvement.

For example, if the current satisfaction rate for a service is 72%, a target of 80% may be appropriate because it reflects a meaningful yet attainable improvement. The target builds on current performance, rather than setting an arbitrary expectation.

When baseline data are not available, units should use the initial assessment to establish a baseline rather than setting an arbitrary target. Once a baseline is established, it can be used in subsequent years to set meaningful and informed targets for improvement, such as:

Outcome: Reduce the percentage of budget denials among submitted budget requests

Year 1: The first year will establish a baseline denial rate.

Year 2: The target will reflect decrease over the baseline (the % of decrease will be determined following year 1 analysis)

Year 3: The target will reflect a decrease over Year 2 performance (the % of decrease will be determined following year 2 analysis)

This doesn't mean that units cannot set a target without baseline data. Units may set targets without baseline data, but best practice is to ground targets in baseline evidence whenever possible.

Assessment Timeline/Schedule

20. What is the institutional assessment schedule at UHD?

With the revision of policy PS 03.A.39, UHD is transitioning from a six-year to a three-year assessment timeline. This change aligns the timeline with assessment practices used by educational programs across the four colleges and responds to feedback from the SACSCOC site visit. Under the revised policy, units will determine how often each outcome is examined within the three-year period, provided that each outcome is assessed and reassessed during that timeframe.

Distribution of Outcomes in an Assessment Plan

21. Are units expected to assess every outcome in the assessment plan every year?

No. Unit are not required to assess every outcome in the assessment plan each year. While many co-curricular and administrative units assess all of their outcomes annually, this is a common (and good) practice rather than a requirement.

22. How many outcomes are units expected to assess each year?

Per Policy PS. 03. A. 39., units are expected to assess at least one each year.

23. Do units have flexibility in how they schedule outcome assessment within the three-year timeline?

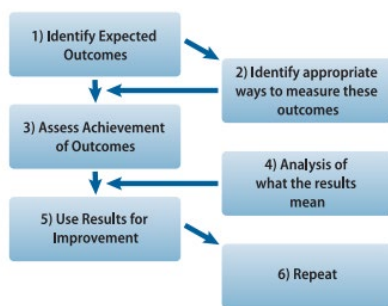
Yes. Units have flexibility in how they schedule outcome assessment within the three-year timeline. While units determine the sequence and timing of outcome assessment, each outcome must be

assessed at least twice within the three-year plan. This ensures that assessment functions as a continuous, iterative process rather than a one-time activity.

Reassessing Outcomes

24. How important is it to take a second look at an outcome within a plan – that is, to assess it and then reassess it?

A central principle of continuous improvement is that assessment is not one and done, but an ongoing, iterative process. This principle is reflected in SACSCOC’s assessment process visual (see below) where Step 6 (“Repeat”) emphasizes the expectation of reassessment. Without that second look at an outcome built into the plan, this expectation is not realized.



Assessment plans that assess each outcome only once cannot demonstrate continuous improvement.

25. Why is there a focus on repeating the assessment of an outcome?

‘Continuous’ improvement requires an ongoing cycle of evaluation and adjustment, rather than a one-off effort. Repeating the assessment of an outcome allows the unit to determine whether the improvements driven by the first round of assessment have been effective (often referred to in assessment literature as “closing and continuing the loop”), or whether other modifications are needed.

26. Are units expected to demonstrate improved results every time an outcome is reassessed?

No. Continuous improvement recognizes that:

- While units may implement changes intended to strengthen their programs and services, improvements in outcomes may take time to emerge and may not be immediately reflected in the next assessment of the same outcome.
- Not every change implemented will necessarily produce improved results.

Therefore, in continuous improvement practice, the emphasis is on learning from the evidence and fine-tuning practices, rather than demonstrating improved results in each subsequent assessment.

What an Assessment Plan Looks Like

27. What should an assessment plan look like? Is there a template to follow?

Assessment plans take a form similar to the one shown below.

Sample Assessment Plan

Unit Mission:

How the Unit mission aligns with the Division mission and strategic plan:

How the Unit mission aligns with UHD's mission and strategic plan:

Outcomes	Methods	Targets	Schedule to Assess
Outcome 1	Method	Target	Year 1 Year 3
Outcome 2	Method	Target	Year 1 Year 3
Outcome 3	Method	Target	Year 2 Year 3

The final version of this table should include the outcomes and detail the assessment methods, targets, and academic years. Methods can be more than one.

APPENDIX B – ASSESSMENT REPORT-RELATED FAQs

The FAQs are listed thematically first, followed by detailed responses in the sections that follow.

Questions about Implemented Changes

1. Why does the reporting process begin with documenting implemented changes since the previous assessment of the same outcome?
2. What if the suggested improvements from the previous assessment were not implemented or only some of them were?
3. What if the outcome being assessed has not been assessed before?

Questions about Summary of Results

4. What distinguishes between a meaningful summary of results from a surface-level one?
5. If an outcome applies to multiple populations or delivery contexts, how should results be summarized?

Questions about Analysis and Interpretation of Results

6. Why is interpretation necessary in an assessment report?
7. Are units expected to speculate when interpreting assessment findings?
8. What distinguishes a strong interpretation of results from a surface-level one?

Questions about Reflecting on Implemented Changes' Influences

9. Why are units asked to reflect on the influence of actions taken since the previous assessment of the outcome?
10. What if changes we implemented did not improve the results or their influence is not visible yet?

Questions about Use of Results

11. How substantial do planned improvements need to be?
12. What if the assessment results show that the target was met? Do units still need to identify improvements?
13. Doesn't this approach imply improvement for improvement's sake?
14. What are common pitfalls to avoid in the Use of Results section?

Implemented Changes

1. Why does the reporting process begin with documenting implemented changes since the previous assessment of the same outcome?

This focus reinforces the principle that continuous improvement depends not only on identifying opportunities for improvement but also on acting on those insights. Revisiting the report from the last time the outcome was assessed and documenting implemented changes helps ensure that assessment is connected to action and follow-through, rather than functioning primarily as an exercise in measuring performance.

2. What if the suggested improvements from the previous assessment were not implemented or only some of them were?

Units should document this transparently. Not every action proposed in a previous assessment will necessarily be implemented. When improvements are not implemented, or only partially implemented, a brief explanation of the reasons provides important context. Beginning the assessment process by reflecting on what was and was not implemented can help units consider whether any of the unaddressed actions are relevant and worth carrying forward.

3. What if the outcome being assessed has not been assessed before?

If the outcome is being assessed for the first time, units should simply indicate that this is the first assessment of the outcome. In this case, there are no prior actions to report. Future assessment of the same outcome will then build on the findings from this initial assessment.

Summary of Results

4. What distinguishes a meaningful summary of results from a surface-level one?

A meaning summary of results explains the assessment context, describes what is seen in the data, and reports results in relation to the target.

Don't Do This	Do This
85% of students reported advising was helpful.	A total of 320 students responded to the survey. The item, "The advising session was helpful in addressing my needs" was used to assess this outcome. Of the 320 respondents, all provided responses to this item. Of these, 85% (N272) selected agree or strongly agree. The target was exceeded.

5. If an outcome applies to multiple populations or delivery contexts, how should results be summarized?

When an outcome applies to multiple populations or service delivery contexts (see FAQs 8 and 14 above), results should be summarized this way:

- Report the overall result (e.g., total percentage and N)
- Disaggregate results for relevant groups (e.g., results for undergraduate students versus graduate students)

Example: A total of 320 students responded to the survey. Of these 85% (N=272) reported that advising sessions were helpful. Although target was exceeded, the disaggregated results showed some nuances. Results differed by on-campus students (88%) and off-site students (78%).

Analysis and Interpretation of Results

6. Why is interpretation necessary in an assessment report?

Reporting assessment results tells only part of the story, interpretation is needed to make sense of the story. Interpretation involves analyzing the results to generate insights and hypotheses about the underlying factors contributing to both the strengths and the gaps the data revealed. This step is essential as the actions proposed for improvement later in the report should be grounded in this interpretation of the findings. Without this analytical step, the connection between assessment results and improvement efforts becomes unclear. When there is not a logical and clear link between assessment results, their interpretations and the improvements proposed, the assessment loses its value.

7. Are units expected to speculate when interpreting assessment findings?

Yes, speculating and making evidence-informed inferences about assessment results is an appropriate and necessary part of assessment reporting. It helps units move beyond reporting results toward understanding possible contributing factors (root causes), which is essential for identifying meaningful next steps for improvement.

8. What distinguishes a strong interpretation of results from a surface-level one?

Data do not speak for themselves. Good interpretation goes beyond what happened to explore why it may have happened. The example on the left below (example to avoid) restates the data and passes it off as interpretation, whereas the example on the right (example to emulate) moves beyond numbers to infer possible explanations for performance.

Don't Do This	Do This
85% of students reported advising was helpful.	The results suggest that a majority of students perceive value in advising. Recent efforts, such as enhancements to advising processes or advisor training may have contributed to this result. At the same time, because 15% didn't report advising as helpful, the data also raise the possibility that some aspects of the experience are not working equally well for all students. Qualitative comments from the survey provided additional context. The less favorable feedback in the comments pointed to delays in communication and limited availability of advising appointments.

Reflecting on Implemented Changes' Influences

9. Why are units asked to reflect on the influence of actions taken since the previous assessment of the outcome?

This reflection connects past actions/decisions to current data and supports an ongoing process of inquiry into what seems to be working, what is not, and what to do next.

10. What if changes we implemented did not improve the results or their influence is not visible yet?

That is entirely possible. Continuous improvement recognizes that:

- progress may occur gradually rather than immediately;
- the effects of implemented changes may not yet be visible in the next assessment cycle; or
- not every change will actually lead to improvement.

What these mean is that units should not think that they must prove improvement. With continuous improvement the goal is learning and action, not proving success.

Use of Results

11. How substantial do planned improvements need to be?

The philosophy of action for continuous improvement is grounded in micro-improvements, which are small, easy, and manageable steps that strengthen student learning without requiring big changes or interventions that may take months or years to yield results. Micro-improvements can be understood as “5, 10, or 15% solutions” – small changes that can shift the trajectory of an outcome.

The final column in the table below provides an example of a micro-improvement, and the other columns show how that improvement was informed by the findings. This example illustrates that planned actions do not need to be complex, resource-intensive, comprehensive, or daunting. Small, targeted changes grounded in assessment findings are all that is needed.

Outcome	Results	Interpretation	Micro-improvement
At least 80% of students will report that advising sessions were helpful	A total of 320 students responded to the survey. The item, “The advising session was helpful in addressing my needs” was used to assess this outcome. Of the 320 respondents, all provided responses to this item. Of these, 85% (N272) selected agree or strongly agree. The target was exceeded.	The results suggest that a majority of students perceive value in advising. Recent efforts, such as enhancements to advising processes or advisor training may have contributed to this result. At the same time, because 15% didn’t report advising as helpful, the data also raise the possibility that some aspects of the experience are not working equally well for all students. Qualitative comments from the survey provided additional context. The less favorable feedback in the comments pointed to delays in communication.	The unit will implement a response-time standard and require instructors to respond to student inquiries within 48 hours.

12. What if the assessment results show that the target was met? Do units still need to identify improvements?

If the interpretation of the findings suggests that particular practices are working well, the improvement section can describe how the unit plans to reinforce or expand those.

Continuous improvement is not about fixing failure; it is about paying attention to what the evidence suggests and taking thoughtful next steps.

13. Doesn’t this approach imply improvement for improvement’s sake?

No. It is not about improvement for improvement’s sake. It is about using evidence to make informed, targeted adjustments where needed.

When people hear the word improvement, they often assume it requires adding something new, such as launching a new initiative, making a large change, or introducing an innovation. However, improvement does not always mean doing more. A helpful guiding question is: What should we stop, start, or continue doing based on evidence? Once units interpret their data and develop hypotheses about the factors contributing to observed strengths or areas for growth, they are better positioned to answer this question. In most cases, improvement may involve discontinuing what is not working, continuing and strengthening what is working, or making small adjustments. By examining what is working, what is not, and what is needed, units can identify meaningful next steps. Approached this way, improvement is not undertaken for its own sake, but as a thoughtful response to what is learned through inquiry.

14. What are common pitfalls to avoid in the Use of Results section?

- Improvements that are not connected to assessment results. This typically stems from missing or shallow interpretation, where results are not analyzed in a way that reveals what they suggest about student learning.
- Improvements that are vague (e.g., “We will improve communication”). Improvement plans should describe specific and actionable steps.
- Improvements that are focused on assessment processes (e.g., revising a survey, modifying the target, etc.).
- Statements such as “continue to monitor.” Monitoring alone does not indicate what the unit plans to do differently, as such it does not count as use of results.

APPENDIX C – From Assessment Reporting to Plan Updates

1. What happens to the assessment plan after an assessment report is completed?

The reporting process naturally leads to a post-report reflection which helps units decide whether to continue, refine, or redesign the assessment plan.

- **Continue the plan:** The current plan is working and is not expired. The outcomes are relevant, specific and measurable, and methods are generating meaningful evidence. No changes are needed.
- **Refine the plan:** The plan is generally sound but small adjustments are needed to strengthen its specific elements (e.g., changes to targets or the assessment schedule, etc.).
- **Redesign the plan:** This applies when:
 - The plan has reached the end of its timeline, and a new/updated plan needs to be developed; and/or
 - The plan needs improvement. This may include situations where outcomes are not clearly defined or measurable, assessment methods are not aligned with the outcomes, evidence collected is not usable for analysis, or the overall structure of the plan is not aligned with institutional or SACSCOC expectations, etc.

2. How do units balance stability and change with their plans?

Assessment plans are best understood as living documents, meaning they are not static or one-time submissions. They are intended to evolve based on what is learned through assessment and changing needs/priorities. As units implement their plans, analyze results, and identify areas for improvement, the plan may be refined to better align with priorities, clarify outcomes, strengthen methods, etc.

3. Do units need to revise their assessment plans every year?

No. Assessment plans are not intended to be rewritten annually. See Question 1 above for specific guidance.

4. What should units consider when redesigning their plans?

- Are there outcomes for which targets have been consistently met over multiple assessments? If so, this may indicate that the unit has developed strong practices related to these outcomes. They may choose to shift attention to other outcomes and include those in the plan.
- Are there outcomes where results have not revealed meaningful opportunities for improvement? If so, the unit may determine that further assessment of this outcome is unlikely to generate new or meaningful insights and may instead shift attention to other outcomes and include those in the plan.
- Are there outcomes where results continue to reveal opportunities for improvement? If so, the unit may choose to keep those in the plan.

- Are there outcomes not currently addressed in the plan but warrant attention? If so, the unit may consider incorporating them into the assessment plan.
- Are there elements of the plan that limit its effectiveness or create misalignment with institutional or SACSCOC expectations? If so, the unit should address the affected elements of the plan to improve alignment and usefulness.