ASSESSMENT PROCESSES HANDBOOK

BARTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Revised: 02/2024

Contents

WHY WE ASSESS:

1. Guiding Principles

Assessment is not about uniform methods to document processes. Rather, assessment is about the unity of purpose, commitment, and dedication of Barton's faculty and staff to ensure students are learning what they came here to learn.

To ensure Barton's programs and services are of the highest quality, continually improved, and meet the needs of its students, the assessment of student learning at Barton:

- serves to improve student learning
- is comprehensive and based upon the values reflected in the mission of the college
- involves a variety of assessment methods
- is a systematic and continuous process for gathering and using information about student learning
- confirms the achievement of student learning outcomes at Barton
- is integrated as part of the culture at Barton
- is supported through on-going training and budgeting processes

2. Continuous Improvement

The staff and faculty at Barton are continually working to improve. They are interested in knowing how their students learn and how to improve their teaching methods. What faculty learn about their students and how well they learn the material will affect how

the information is presented to the next class and the one after that in a continuous cycle of improvement as overseen by the Outcomes Assessment Committee (OAC).

3. Mission

*Barton offers exceptional and affordable **learning opportunities** supporting student, community, and employee needs.*

Assessment is the driving force for more effective and meaningful courses, programs, degrees, and overall **learning opportunities** for Barton's students.

Student learning takes place throughout Barton. It is what Barton is about. Throughout the college experience learning is assessed to ensure Barton is meeting its responsibilities.

4. HLC Mandate for Accreditation

Assessment at its core is about improving student learning. Clearly our accrediting body, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) values student learning as well. As such, it is not surprising that assessment is woven throughout the many criteria for accreditation.

Barton is not committed to assessment simply because of an accreditation mandate, accreditation follows naturally due to Barton's commitment to improving student learning.

HLC Criteria 4.B. The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.
1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and co-curricular offerings.
2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Assessment focuses on specific student learning outcomes (SLOs) relating to what a student will remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, create, etc. when they have completed a given learning experience. As such, **student learning outcomes is the generic term used to stand for all learning outcomes** independent of level.

Benchmark Definition

The student learning outcomes are compared to a benchmark, or minimum level of performance as decided by the respective faculty, staff, or other party, which must be met for the SLO to be reached or attained. Although the specific benchmark is left to the respective area to decide, typically, **70% is the standard benchmark** used for SLOs established by the Board of Trustees (BOT) with a stretch goal or **aspirational benchmark of 80%**.

LEVELS OF ASSESSMENT

The levels of assessment begin with the mission of the college in the following structure:
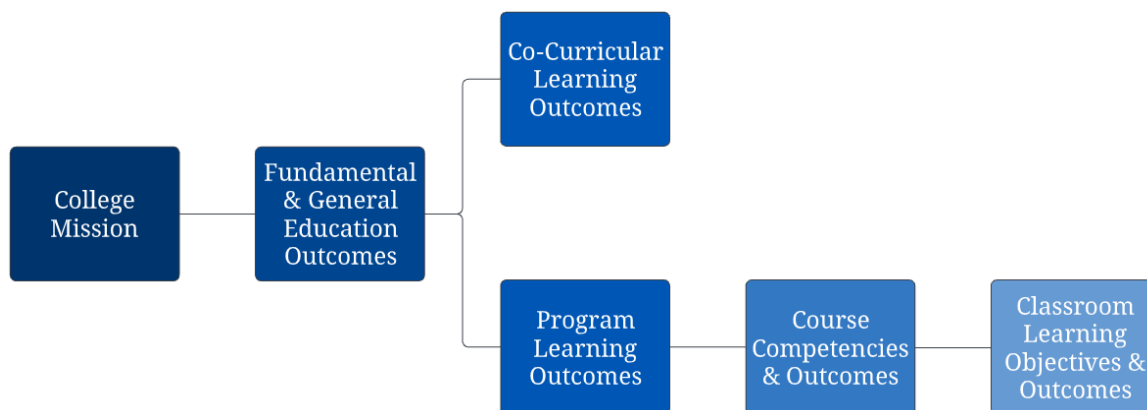
Assessment Process Map

The following outlines the process used to assess SLOs at all levels of assessment:

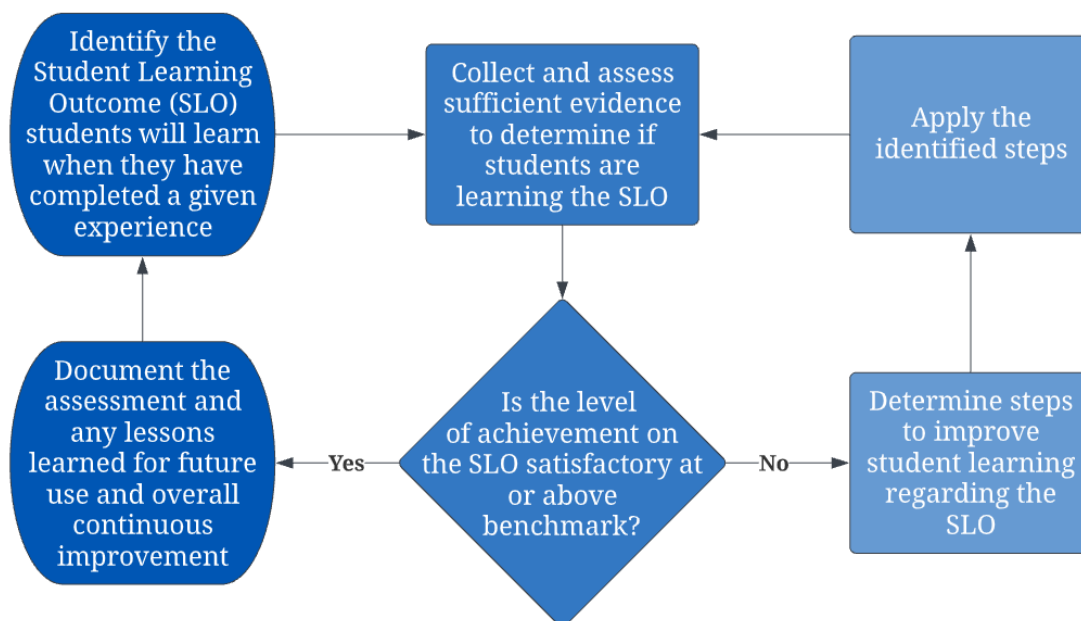# I.   Institutional Assessment

Barton's Board of Trustees have defined a series of END statements, which express in measurable terms the value Barton intends to create in each priority area. Barton's Fundamental Learning Outcomes (FLOs) support the institutional mission through Barton's END: Fundamental Skills.

Barton's FLOs relate the ability of a given subject to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and values which enable them to be productive in work, family, and community.

1. **Critical Thinking**: Study a given subject critically, including processes to analyze and synthesize important parts of the subject, ask appropriate and useful questions about the study of this subject, and solve problems within the subject area.
2. **Life-Long Learning**: Relate the relevance of a given subject to the individual student's life, to develop habits that encourage life-long, responsible, and independent learning, and to apply appropriate and useful knowledge of the values, conventions, and institutions within an academic discipline.
3. **Historical Perspective**: Describe how history works, including how historical perspective can strengthen understanding of a given academic subject, and how the history of human endeavor has helped develop that subject.
4. **Technological Perspective**: Explain how technologies affect important parts of human life and how information technologies shape the study of a given subject.
5. **Cultural Perspective**: Explain how culture develops through various aspects of human endeavor, how culture develops understanding of a given subject, and how a given subject develops within diverse cultures.

As directed by the BOT, assessment of the FLOs will serve as an indicator of the fundamental skills kept by our students and their ability to lead productive lives.

1. Align with the Fundamental Learning Outcomes

Institutional assessment assesses the FLOs. It is not the intention of institutional assessment for faculty to create yet another assessment tool to assess their students. Rather, the intention is to use assessments at other levels of assessment in a dual role.

The FLOs are intended to give an overall picture of the learning experiences at Barton. As such, no one course satisfies all these outcomes, but it is a collection of them all. The goal then is to identify which of the SLOs currently being assessed at other levels of assessment also align with the FLOs.

The Assessment Committees will work with faculty to determine the respective FLOs being assessed using the assessment tools already in place at the other levels of assessment.

2. Use, Apply, and Document the Assessment

The resulting data will be collected and compiled by the Outcomes Assessment Committee. The resulting data will be reviewed by OAC to decide next steps to address any deficiencies or areas needing professional development as shown in the data.

3. Close the Loop

The Coordinator of Assessment will report to the Board of Trustees on the assessment of the FLOs as tied to the respective END statement. If the END statement is not met as decided by the BOT, adjustments will be made to their satisfaction. Regardless, comments and feedback from the BOT will be relayed back to OAC.

II.   General Education Assessment

Currently General Education Assessment at Barton is in the planning phase.

For assessment purposes, the FLOs served as the general education outcomes for several years and Barton is only beginning to transition our assessment practices over to the recently developed General Education Learning Outcomes (GLOs). Additionally, the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) is developing separate GLOs for Kansas which further complicates matters.

Goal 1: Faculty and staff will make curricular adjustments to improve student learning based on the assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes (GLOs), the knowledge, skills, or abilities students will have upon completion of the respective curriculum.

Goal 2: Strategies to improve student learning will be set up with specific goals sustained by budgetary requests, as needed, in support of Barton's Strategic Planning Framework and the overall Mission of the College.

1. General Education Learning Outcomes

A copy of Barton's GLOs can be found on the [assessment website](#).

2. Align with the Fundamental Learning Outcomes

Goal 3: The Assessment Committees will work with the Learning Instruction and Curriculum Committee (LICC) to identify the respective GLOs being assessed using the assessment tools already in place at the other levels of assessment. These will then be aligned with the FLOs in support of institutional assessment.

3. Use, Apply, and Document the Assessment

Goal 4: Faculty will use forms to collect and aggregate the respective general education assessment data.

4. Close the Loop

Goal 5: The resulting data will be reviewed by the Outcomes Assessment Committee to decide next steps to address any deficiencies or areas needing professional development in coordination with the Center.

Goal 6: The Coordinator of Assessment will report to LICC on the General Education Learning Outcomes and their assessment.

III. Co-Curricular Assessment

Barton is committed to assessing and strengthening co-curricular organizations. Barton recognizes and values that student learning is most effective when students can make meaningful connections across their many educational experiences, both curricular and co-curricular.

Barton faculty and staff will make informed decisions to improve student learning based on the assessment of student learning outcomes, that identify the knowledge, skills, or abilities students will develop within a given co-curricular group.

1. Definition of Co-Curricular Activities

The Higher Learning Commission defines Co-Curricular activities as "learning activities, programs, and experiences that reinforce the institution's mission and values and complement the formal curriculum." Specifically, however, they rely on institutions to "determine for themselves, based on their mission, what they deem to be co-curricular, as an essential part of, or partner to, their curricular activities (as opposed to "extra-" curricular)."

To better identify which programs and activities should be assessed through Barton's Co-Curricular Assessment Sub-Committee (CCAC), the following definition was approved by Barton's Outcome Assessment Committee:

Barton Community College's Co-Curricular groups are student organizations or clubs designed to support curricular outcomes and objectives. These are separate from extra-curricular activities (activities solely for social engagement or entertainment and without curricular connection), performance groups (activities developed through credit-bearing courses, assessed through course and program level assessments), and Student Services (activities and student interactions such as advisement, tutoring center, career services, etc. which are assessed through various institutional reviews).

All student organizations are asked to complete a co-curricular survey used to evaluate the curricular support (if any) the organization provides students. Once the CCAC determines a student organization to be co-curricular, they must take part in the co-curricular assessment process as detailed in the Co-Curricular Assessment Process Handbook available on the [assessment website](#).

2. Align with the Fundamental Learning Outcomes

Co-curricular activities align with Barton's FLOs. This alignment supports the curricular purpose of co-curricular activities as defined by Barton.

3. Use, Apply, and Document the Assessment

The group sponsor will use a standard process report template to guide them as they identify the group's learning outcomes, figure out a plan for data collection, and provide a snapshot of the group's activities and accomplishments. Sponsors should refer to the Co-Curricular Assessment Process Handbook available on the [assessment website](#) for more information on the process report.

4. Close the Loop

The process reports will be updated annually to document assessment data and changes made by the group because of the assessment data.

The submitted process reports are then compiled by the Co-Curricular Assessment Sub-Committee in a report as evidence of co-curricular assessment at Barton to be posted to the [assessment website](#) for review.

IV. Program Assessment

Program assessment looks at the various skills and abilities students should achieve throughout a given program at Barton. By assessing these learning outcomes, faculty and staff can enact programmatic adjustments to drive improved student learning;

thereby keeping the high educational standards, quality, and integrity of the programmatic offerings at Barton.

Barton faculty and staff will make holistic curricular adjustments to improve student learning based on the assessment of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs). Strategies to improve student learning will be set up with specific goals sustained by budgetary requests, as needed, within the respective Instructional Reviews (**also called Program Reviews**) supporting Barton's Strategic Planning Framework.

1. Program Learning Outcomes

Program learning outcomes look to name the core identity and values of a program. These are the skills and abilities a student has upon completion of a given program. As part of Barton's efforts to keep student learning at the forefront of Instructional Review, each program will develop Program Learning Outcomes and means of assessing them.

A Program Learning Outcomes Guide (Brainstorming Guide) may be used to aid with this endeavor. The guide was developed with the help of the Higher Learning Commission Mentors during Barton's participation in the HLC Assessment Academy and is found on the assessment website.

2. Align with the Fundamental Learning Outcomes

As an example, represented below, the Fine Arts Program may have a Program Learning Outcome that upon completion of the program, students will be able to create a body of work. Two such courses, as an example, that support this outcome include Graphic Design and Painting I. This is aligned due to the stated competencies, again two are
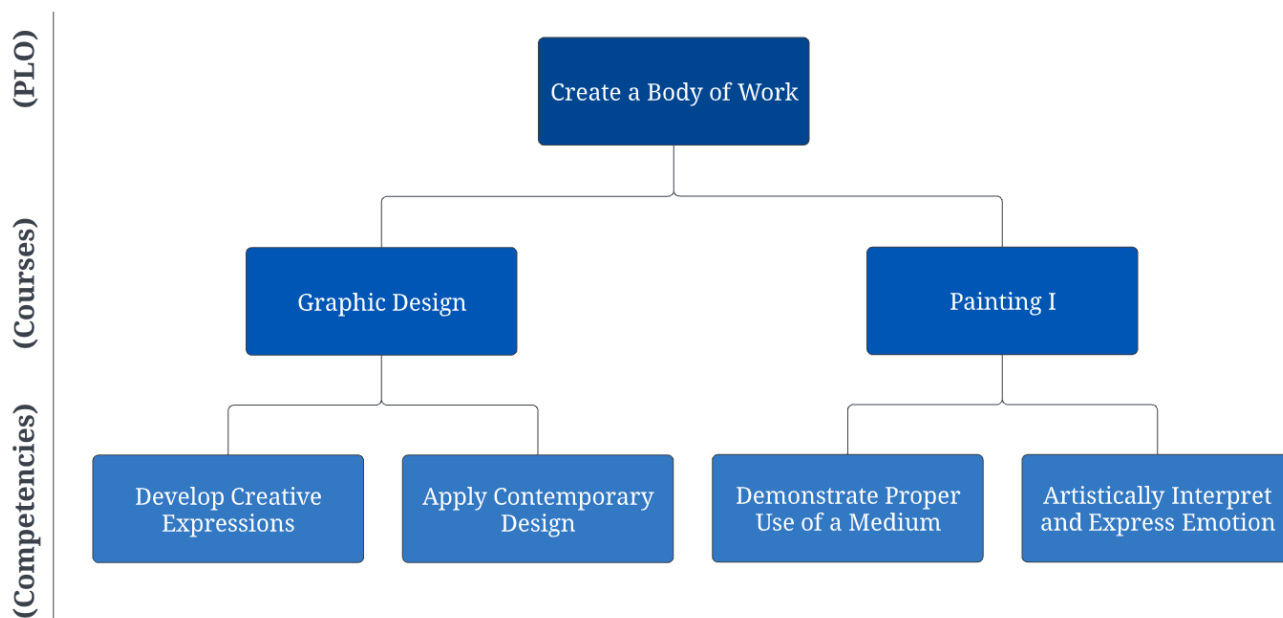
listed as an example, within each course which directly support the PLO. Assessment of the stated competencies can then be aggregated to an overall score for the given courses, which can be further compiled for an overall measure of the PLO.

The Program Assessment Sub-Committee (PLAC) will then align the PLOs with the FLOs in support of institutional assessment as previously said.

3. Use, Apply, and Document the Assessment

Data spreadsheets will be developed with PLAC to collect and aggregate the respective program assessment data.

Program assessment data will be analyzed as part of the Instructional Review process. As such, faculty and staff will make program goals and strategic budgetary requests informed by student learning outcomes.

4. Close the Loop

The resulting data will be reviewed by PLAC to decide next steps to address any deficiencies or areas needing professional development in coordination with the Center.

The submitted data spreadsheets are then compiled by the Program Assessment Sub-Committee in a report as evidence of program assessment at Barton and made available to faculty and staff during the respective Instructional Review cycle.

V.   Course Assessment

The goal of course assessment is to measure SLOs based on course competencies at the end of a given course, find competency areas in need of improvement, figure out the necessary steps to improve student learning, and then make the changes to the course content for future offerings of the course.

Barton faculty and staff will make macro-adjustments to improve student learning based on the summative assessment of student learning outcomes (SLOs), the course competencies listed in the syllabus, and the various course assessments.

Multiple faculty teaching the same course should collaborate in their individual course assessment processes; however, the goal of course assessment is not to compare one instructor to another instructor. Although recommended, it is not needed for every instructor teaching the same course to have an identical course assessment. Instead, it is more important for faculty to be able to analyze and apply data to improve their instruction of the material. This goal may still be met even if a faculty member only applies their respective data.

1. Choose a Student Learning Outcome to Assess

The student learning outcomes can be found in the respective course syllabus, namely the course competencies. Review the course competencies prior to developing a course and outline how each of them will be assessed so that the respective learning opportunities can be developed and placed accordingly. Faculty must assess all competencies as listed in the course syllabus; however, they only must report their assessment of one competency.

2. Choose an Assessment Technique

When assessing the course competencies, faculty should collect sufficient evidence to figure out if students are meeting them at a satisfactory level. Course assessment instruments should be applied once students have had sufficient opportunities to master the competency. This way the respective data informs the faculty member of any competencies which are not met at a satisfactory level by the end of the course.

Common examples of assessment instruments include a final exam, final presentation, final essay, final speech, final project, production, or cumulative body of work.

3. Use, Apply, and Document the Assessment

Once strengths and weaknesses have been found, faculty can build off them and begin to plan and implement changes to address identified weaknesses to improve student learning, so that the next time the course is taught, faculty can use the course assessment to gauge whether these changes were successful in a continuous cycle of improvement in student learning.

Again, although faculty must teach and assess all the stated competencies in the syllabus throughout a given course, to spot-check, each faculty member (adjunct, part-time, and full-time) is asked to **document one competency from one course each term** (fall and spring). Faculty will document their course assessment using a Microsoft Office Form provided by the Course Assessment Sub-Committee.

4. Close the Loop

Faculty should review the improvements made to their courses and collaborate with peer faculty to share best practices and learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses. Working together, faculty can collectively improve the quality of the course regardless of location and modality.

The submitted course assessments are then compiled by the Course Assessment Sub-Committee in a report as evidence of course assessment at Barton to be posted to the assessment website for review.

VI.   Classroom Assessment

Classroom assessments techniques (CATs) measure student learning as it happens daily. Adjustments made because of classroom assessment affect the same group of students that were administered the CAT, and any insights are then carried over to future offerings of the course. Overall, classroom assessment measures student learning on a smaller scale. Faculty are encouraged to not think in terms of one course offering to the next, but from one lesson to the next.

Barton faculty and staff will make micro-adjustments to improve student learning based on the formative assessment of classroom learning objectives, the learning outcomes for a given lesson, using various classroom assessment techniques.

1. Choose a Student Learning Outcome to Assess

Faculty must first decide the learning goal for a given lesson or activity. Faculty should then recognize the purpose of the lesson and what students will learn as this information drives how the material is presented.

2. Choose an Assessment Technique

Faculty should refer to the Classroom Assessment Process Handbook available on the assessment website for a sampling of potential CATs and find a suitable assessment technique for their given learning goal.

Also, various texts from leading authors at the forefront of the assessment of student learning have been added to the diverse collection of books at the Great Bend campus library, the Learning Resource Center (LRC). For staff and faculty without direct access to the Great Bend campus, contact the LRC for more information and help with an inter-campus library loan so these resources can be made available.

3. Use and Apply the Assessment

Information gathered from CATs is meant to affect real-time adjustments designed to improve student learning. As such, faculty should incorporate improvement strategies resulting from the assessment data sooner rather than later.

4. Close the Loop

Faculty should review their classroom assessment from the lens of their course. Discussing these results with peer faculty members is an effective way for faculty to learn from each other and collaborate on any potential issues. Faculty can then apply the added insight into how students learn throughout the rest of the course.

Faculty are expected to conduct Classroom Assessment Techniques throughout their courses.

ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Oversight of the various levels of assessment is provided by faculty led committees given by the following organizational structure:

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                    Coordinator of
                     Assessment
                  /              \
          Outcomes              Assessment
         Assessment             Institute
         Committee
      /      |       \
Co-Curricular   Program      Course
Assessment    Assessment   Assessment
Committee     Committee    Committee
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