

# No Frills

## Assessment Plan

(Walvoord, 2010)

Includes three components:

1. Learning goals for each of your degrees, certificates, or programs of study (for example, goals for undergraduate music history, for undergraduate music performance, for your certificate in music therapy, and each of your graduate degrees)
2. Two measures of how well your students are achieving the goals
  - a. One direct measure  
My preference: A sample of student work completed at the end of their course of study, analyzed by faculty to find the strengths and weaknesses of the students as a group. For certain disciplines, a certification, licensure exam, or a major field test will be a second direct measure. (The former could occur in one two-hour department meeting.)
  - b. One indirect measure  
My preference: Student surveys and/or focus groups asking three questions:
    - i. How well did you achieve each of the following departmental learning goals? (For a survey, list each department goal, with a scale for each: for example, “extremely well, very well, adequately well, not very well, not at all” or an “agree/disagree” scale)
    - ii. What aspects of your education in this department helped you with your learning, and why were they helpful?
    - iii. What might the department do differently that would help you learn more effectively, and why would these actions help?

In some fields, job placement rates will be important.

3. A forum to discuss data and identify action items
  - a. One two-hour department meeting each year, in which the department discusses whatever data it has about student learning in one of its degrees or programs, decides on one action item to improve student learning, and assigns responsibility for follow-up.
  - b. Follow-up actions: action on one item may take several years, and that’s okay; also okay to rotate degrees and programs, focusing on one or two of them each year.
  - c. Keep minutes of the meetings for your own follow-up, and also as documentation for external audiences as needed.

**Note:** This basic no-frills plan is not perfect, and your department may want to expand upon it. But if every department at your institution had a useful, robust version of this plan, it would improve student learning significantly. And if every department would post, on an institutional website, a two- or three-page description of its assessment system for each of its degrees or programs, that web site would be a fine tool for a regional reaccreditation review.

For more see Walvoord, B. E. (2010). [\*Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education\*](#) (pp. 59-60). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass