



## **A Guide to Periodically Assessing Your Program-Level Assessment Process**

**Prepared by:**

**Rachel Ebner, Ph.D.**

**Director of Student Learning Assessment**

As part of Yeshiva University's overarching assessment plan, all programs are asked to engage in systematic, continuous, and well-documented assessment processes. In order to ensure that program-level assessment processes are generating meaningful information that is being used to improve student learning outcomes, it is important for programs to periodically review their program-level assessment process. Below is a list of guiding questions to consider when assessing the effectiveness of your program-level assessment process.

- 1. What is the purpose of our assessment process?** Are we engaging in assessment just to appease administrators and accreditation bodies, or are we engaging in assessment for the purpose of refining our program to ensure achievement of student learning outcomes? If the former is true, the assessment process being implemented is most likely not very meaningful. To ensure that a meaningful assessment proc

offered to students in the program, and that the student-learning program goals are aligned with the overarching mission and learning goals of the institution.

**4. Are the student-learning objectives, clear, specific, student-centered, and measurable?**

The primary difference between a student learning goal and a student learning objective is that an objective is directly measurable and a goal is not. Student learning goals are written at the conceptual level. Student learning objectives are the measurable indicators of the larger overarching goal. In general, there should be at least two measurable indicators of each goal. To determine if an objective is directly measurable, ask yourself whether it focuses on one-specific directly observable behavior that serves as an indicator of the larger overarching goal. As with student learning goals, student learning objectives should begin with the phrase “students will be able to...”

**5. Have we created a meaningful cycle for periodically assessing all of our program-level objectives?**

Typically, it is not possible to meaningfully assess every program objective each semester. As a result, assessing objectives on a cyclical basis can be an effective way to ensure that all of your objectives are periodically assessed. It is important to identify whether there are any program objectives that are never, or are rarely assessed. In those cases ask whether those objectives are in fact central to the program. If the answer is yes then it is important to build those objectives into the assessment process. If the answer is no then those objectives should be eliminated. In general, it is better to air on the side of fewer objectives than too many objectives so that each objective can be periodically assessed in a meaningful way

of students' learning experiences and outcomes. Examples of indirect assessment methods might include surveys, course evaluations, or interviews. While indirect assessments can provide useful information as well, they should not be implemented in place of direct assessment methods. Rather, indirect assessment methods should serve as a compliment to direct assessment methods. In addition, it is essential that the direct assessment method is aligned with the given objective. For example, if the objective is for students to be able to create informed hypotheses, then the assessment needs to align with this objective. A multiple choice test would not be a valid measure of this objective because that kind of assessment is not providing students with the opportunity to create. On the other hand, if the objective is for students to be able to recall the meanings of key concepts, a multiple choice test might be sufficient.

**8. Do we share assessment results with other program faculty?**



administrators, and even students) to know the program's expectations with regards to student learning objectives, as well as areas of strength, and areas in need of improvement within the program.