NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE
QuickStart to Course-Level Assessment
(Revised Spring 2013*)

Nassau Community College is at the forefront of the development and maintenance of a rigorous, campus-wide assessment program. The recent introduction of the automated assessment reporting system, Taskstream, reinforces our commitment to and enhances our ability to deliver the highest standards of teaching to achieve the highest levels of learning. QuickStart was developed to help you begin participating in this program by conducting learning assessments in the classroom.

The fundamental objective of conducting course-level assessments is to optimize the quality of our students' learning experiences and outcomes. Your participation in the College's assessment activities will reward you by revealing which learning objectives are being met and which new teaching methods have enhanced student learning.

QuickStart is a brief synopsis of the more comprehensive Concepts and Procedures for Academic Assessment at Nassau Community College, which can serve as your detailed guide to classroom assessment activities. The Concepts and Procedures manual may be accessed online at:


Please note that if you are teaching a course with more than one section, the course coordinator will provide you with parts of that course's assessment matrix already prepared. Be sure and discuss the details of the course-specific assessment methods with the course coordinator before beginning your own assessment activities.

QuickStart has three sections:

I. A description of the three main phases of course-level assessment
II. An overview of the five steps of course-level assessment
III. A more detailed description of each of the five steps with suggested terminology and assessment tools to employ when preparing the reporting matrix. Note that the columns of the matrix correspond to the five steps of course-level assessment.

*This Document will be updated as needed by the Publications Subcommittee of the Academic Senate Assessment Committee:

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OVERVIEW
THE THREE MAIN PHASES OF COURSE-LEVEL ASSESSMENT

PHASE I – Plan and Conduct a Course-Level Assessment

1. State the learning goals for a particular course.

    **Note:** Multi-section courses with various instructors will require coordination of the goals to be assessed. This will provide standardization of basic components of course development, which all students taking the course can expect to learn. See the course coordinator or your department assessment representative for more details.

2. Focus on designating one to five learning outcomes for each learning goal.

3. Identify and/or develop the measurement tool(s) that will be used to collect assessment data for each learning outcome.

4. Employ the tool(s) to gather data and evaluate as appropriate.

5. Identify desired modifications through analysis of assessment data and evaluation of the results.


    **Note:** If it is a multi-section course, the data is forwarded to the course coordinator for analysis and evaluation. If it is a single-section course, the instructor conducts the analysis and evaluation and forwards the results to the chair of the Departmental Assessment Committee.

PHASE II – Plan and Conduct a Course-Level Modification Assessment

7. Implement any modifications suggested by the results of the assessment.

8. Following your Department’s Assessment schedule, conduct the next course-level assessment after implementing modifications.

9. Evaluate the impact of the modifications on the students’ achievement of the course’s learning goals.


PHASE III – Respond to Results of Course-Level and Modification Assessments

11. Communicate the results to students as appropriate and ask for their feedback and comments.

12. Discuss the impact of the assessment on learning outcomes with other faculty teaching the same course. Brainstorm needed modifications to improve and/or maintain the learning process.

13. Repeat Phases II and III according to the schedule in your Departmental Assessment Plan.
GENERAL PROCEDURES: THE FIVE STEPS OF COURSE-LEVEL ASSESSMENT

STEP ONE: Learning Goals

Purpose: To answer the following question

“What main concepts, skills, and/or principles do our students need to learn from this particular lesson, unit or course?”

Some examples of learning goals for different disciplines:

⇒ To improve students’ listening skills (Communications)
⇒ To develop students’ understanding of the meaning and measurement of inflation (Economics and Finance)
⇒ To have students acquire the statistical methods used to represent and describe data sets (Mathematics and Statistics)

STEP TWO: Measurable Learning Outcomes

Purpose: To answer the following question

“What are students expected to do to demonstrate that the learning goal has been achieved?”

Some examples of outcome behaviors for different disciplines:

⇒ Students will be able to evaluate their level of effective and ineffective listening skills (Communications).
⇒ Students will distinguish different levels of inflation (normal inflation, hyperinflation, disinflation, and deflation) by calculating a consumer price index using hypothetical data (Economics and Finance).
⇒ Students will be able to reduce a set of statistical data to a frequency distribution, calculate the mean, mode and standard deviation of the distribution, and interpret these measures for samples and for populations (Mathematics and Statistics).

STEP THREE: Measurement Methods and Instruments

Purpose: To answer the following question

“What strategies (activities/tools/instruments/devices/techniques) will be used to demonstrate the extent to which each specific learning outcome has been achieved?”

AND

“What performance criteria should be employed to demonstrate the extent to which each learning outcome has been achieved?”

The measurement instrument for assessing the extent to which students have achieved the desired learning outcomes is developed. The instrument may be either formal or informal, depending upon the discipline and/or the learning outcome desired.

Examples of FORMAL assessment tools include: Quizzes & Tests; Critique Essays; Lab Reports; Homework Assignments; Customized Exercises/Projects

Examples of INFORMAL assessment tools include:

⇒ Posing and soliciting questions/comments
⇒ Initiating discussions
⇒ Eliciting student feedback on what they are actually learning

*NOTE: Informal measurements are used throughout the semester and are intended to complement formal evaluation instruments. Informal evaluations usually aren’t graded.

STEP FOUR: Data Collection, Analysis and Evaluation

Purpose: To answer the following question

“To what extent do the measurement results determine that the learning goal was achieved?”

In this step, the instructor employs the assessment strategy to gather data and to evaluate it. If it is a multi-section class, the data is forwarded to the course coordinator for analysis and evaluation; if it is a single section course, the instructor conducts the analysis and evaluation. In both multi-section and single-section courses, the classroom instructor administers the measurement tools and gathers the data. The raw score results should be recorded anonymously, and aggregate student performance should be indicated relative to prescribed expectations. The data should be assigned one of four categories: “Exceeding,” “Meeting,” “Approaching,” or “Not Meeting” expectations. The course coordinator gathers data from all instructors and summarizes data for that course. A report of findings should be submitted to the departmental assessment committee chair and should include the following information about the sample:

⇒ Number and percentage of students and sections
⇒ Number and percentage of full-time and adjunct faculty
⇒ Number and percentage of students who are respectively exceeding, meeting, approaching or not meeting expectations for each specified learning outcome.

STEP FIVE: Results-Based Modifications

Purpose: To answer the following question

“What changes in curriculum, course content, or pedagogy are recommended that have potential to improve learning outcomes?”

Specifically, this step answers the following questions:

⇒ What has the classroom assessment experience indicated about improving student learning or the teaching strategies?
⇒ What specific changes are needed with respect to
  o Assessment measurements?
  o Expected learning outcomes?
  o Performance criteria?

The identified change or changes should be implemented as soon as possible and reassessed according to the Departmental Assessment Plan (DAP).
**PROCEDURE DETAILS: BUILDING THE MATRIX**

**Course-Level Assessment Matrix At-A-Glance**

The Course-Level Assessment Matrix is the mechanism used for reporting assessment information. The matrix is a uniform format for communicating to faculty and other interested parties the designs, implementations, and results of classroom assessments. The one shown below models the kinds of questions and strategies used in building a matrix.

Faculty may access assessment matrices at www.ncc.edu/assessment (click on "Academic Assessment at NCC", then click on "Resources").

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
<th>Step 4</th>
<th>Step 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Goals</td>
<td>Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>Measurement</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Modifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer this Question:</td>
<td>Answer this Question:</td>
<td>Answer this Question:</td>
<td>Answer this Question:</td>
<td>Answer this Question:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What main concepts, skills, and/or principles do the students need to learn from this particular lesson, unit, or course?</td>
<td>What are students expected to do to demonstrate that the learning goal has been achieved?</td>
<td>What strategies (activities, tools, instruments, devices, and techniques) will be used to demonstrate the extent to which each specific learning outcome has been achieved (to gauge the extent to which the intended learning took place)?</td>
<td>To what extent do the measurement results determine that the learning goal was achieved?</td>
<td>What changes in curriculum, course content, or pedagogy are recommended that have potential to improve learning outcomes?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Language, e.g.:**

- To improve
- To teach
- To involve
- To develop
- To understand
- To enhance
- To define
- To list
- To name
- To relate

To develop skills needed to:

- Conceptualize
- Synthesize
- Analyze

To transfer information to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student will be able to:</th>
<th>Student will be able to:</th>
<th>a) Formal e.g.:</th>
<th>How did the students perform?</th>
<th>What has the classroom assessment experience indicated about how to improve student learning or teaching strategies?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate /Apply</td>
<td>Demonstrate /Apply</td>
<td>Quizzes, tests, essays, true-false tests, pre and post tests, critique essays, term papers, lab reports, homework assignments, customized exercises or projects. <strong>Note: Usually graded</strong></td>
<td>To what extent did learning take place?</td>
<td>Is there a need for change with respect to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to/</td>
<td>Respond to/</td>
<td>b) Informal e.g.: Solicit questions, comments, initiate discussion, elicit student feedback, customized exercises <strong>Note: Usually not graded</strong></td>
<td>The measurement instruments used tended to show that...</td>
<td>Measurement instruments?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguish/Explain/Solve/</td>
<td>Distinguish/Explain/Solve/</td>
<td>Use the following language to construct measurements: When presented with...students will be expected to...</td>
<td>Faculty reviewed the results and found that...</td>
<td>Learning outcomes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguish/Relate/Identify/</td>
<td>Distinguish/Relate/Identify/</td>
<td>When asked to perform... Students will achieve %</td>
<td>Student responses demonstrated that...</td>
<td>Teaching goals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine/List/Describe/</td>
<td>Determine/List/Describe/</td>
<td>When asked to summarize... Students are expected to</td>
<td>The results indicated that...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enumerate/Draw/Define/</td>
<td>Enumerate/Draw/Define/</td>
<td>Students will be able to... when asked to...</td>
<td>Student feedback:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find/Calculate/Discuss/</td>
<td>Find/Calculate/Discuss/</td>
<td><strong>When given true-false quiz students...</strong> Are expected to achieve % Students will be asked to explain three concepts incorporating the vocabulary of . . .</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulate/Show/Use/</td>
<td>Formulate/Show/Use/</td>
<td>Performance Criteria are Established</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribute/Experiment/</td>
<td>Distribute/Experiment/</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpret/Compare/</td>
<td>Interpret/Compare/</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluate/Contrast/</td>
<td>Evaluate/Contrast/</td>
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<tr>
<td>Translate/Critize/</td>
<td>Translate/Critize/</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restate/Diagram/Recognize</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inspect/Express/Debate/</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locate/Question/Review/</td>
<td>Locate/Question/Review/</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relate/Examine</td>
<td>Relate/Examine</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Performance Criteria are Established**