2021-2022 Support Unit Assessment

Administrative & Academic and Student Support Services

Assessment Guidelines

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Foreword

The purpose of support unit assessment is to gather information on which to inform continuous improvement of functions and processes within the unit. The information presented in each section of this manual defines Texas A&M University’s expectations for the documentation of outcome/objective assessment. This “how-to” manual is designed to guide administrative units and academic and student support units (hereafter referred to as support units) through the assessment process, highlight best practices, and facilitate self- and peer-review of Assessment Plans and Assessment Reports.
Units Participating in Assessment at Texas A&M University

There are two types of support units that engage in assessment at Texas A&M University: (1) Administrative units, and (2) Academic and student support units. These are defined below:\(^1\):

- **Administrative units** include offices that primarily serve the institution by ensuring the effective and efficient operation of the institution. Typically, these units include divisions such as finance and administration, facilities and physical plant operations, research, marketing and communication, external affairs, and development, among others. Although essential to the overall operation of the institution, these units contribute to the educational mission of the university in a more indirect way than offices specifically designed to support educational programs or provide academic or student support services.

- **Academic and Student Support units** provide services that support student and/or faculty success. These units typically include library and learning/information resources, faculty resource centers, tutoring, writing centers, academic computer centers, student disability support centers, financial aid, residence life, student activities, and the dean of students’ office, among others. Most institutions also include admissions offices within this category. These units provide direct support to faculty and students as related to their educational programs, indirect support for student learning, and/or have a specific co-curricular mission that supports the college experience.

Both types of units follow the same assessment process. There are some instances where the requirements differ slightly. Those instances are noted throughout this manual. If you are unsure which category your unit falls under, please contact the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Evaluation (assessment@tamu.edu).

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\(^1\) Per SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation, 2018; Standards 7.3 and 8.2.c
Components of Support Unit Assessment

The walkthrough sections of this companion manual follow the same order of the sections comprising the Assessment Plan and Assessment Report, as outlined below.

**NOTE:** Each section of this companion manual includes an FAQ list. The FAQs in **blue text** indicate technical information that addresses functionality within the AEFIS system.

**Assessment Plan.** The *Assessment Plan*, completed every Spring semester, identifies the outcomes/objectives that will be assessed during the *upcoming* year (academic, fiscal, or calendar), as well as the measures and targets used to assess each one. Units may identify as many outcomes/objectives as they see fit to assess in a given year, but at least one must be assessed annually.

The Assessment Plan consists of the following:
- Department/Unit Purpose
- Outcomes/Objectives
- Measures & Targets

**Assessment Report.** The *Assessment Report* summarizes assessment results (i.e., findings) gathered over the course of the *previous* year, as outlined in the established Assessment Plan for that year. The Assessment Report also includes the unit’s intended use of results, formerly called *Data-Informed Actions*. In the *Use of Results* section, the unit describes action(s) staff will implement to improve their outcomes/objectives. At least one action based on assessment results is required each year.

Finally, the Assessment Report includes a status update on an action identified in a previous Assessment Report, a process formerly called *Closing the Loop*.

The Assessment Report is submitted annually in the late fall (draft) and early spring (final).

The Assessment Report consists of the following:
- Findings
- Use of Results
- Status Update on a Previously Identified Action

The components making up the Plan and Report are covered individually and in detail throughout this manual. Component sections include:
- A description of the component
- Criteria for what each component should include and on which feedback is provided
- Examples
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Snapshots of what the components look like in AEFIS
A Note About Special Consideration of Unique Student Populations

Where applicable, academic and student support units should address how they routinely and systematically evaluate whether (1) online students and (2) students at alternate geographic locations have access to comparable services as students who attend TAMU locally. Units responsible for providing or overseeing the provision of support services to all TAMU students (regardless of mode of delivery or geographic location) should clearly state this and describe the strategies used to ensure identified outcomes/objects are being met.

There are feedback criteria specific to the consideration of unique student populations in the Findings and Use of Results sections of the Assessment Report. Please refer to the related sections of this manual for more detailed information. It is important to recognize that it may be necessary to assess online services and/or services at alternate geographic locations using different outcomes and/or measures.

Online students and students at alternate geographic locations should be considered one type unique student population. Consideration should also be given to unique characteristics such as underrepresented minority status, students with disabilities, and/or degree level (undergraduate and graduate/professional).

\[\text{In the event services are provide through contracts or alternative means, assessment strategies and expectations will be identified in collaboration with the Assistant Provost for Institutional Effectiveness.}\]
2021-22 Workflow & Deadlines

Over the course of the two-year assessment cycle, assessment forms follow a 7-step workflow. Individuals in the following roles participate at one or various points in the cycle:

- **Program Coordinators**: The staff and/or unit leadership responsible for documenting and submitting Assessment Plans and Reports in AEFIS

- **Assessment Liaisons**: Appointed individuals who work with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Evaluation (OIE&E) to provide support and communicate expectations to Program Coordinators in their respective divisions; responsible for providing internal feedback on Assessment Plans and Reports

- **OIE&E**: The administrative office responsible for providing support to those in the roles defined above as they participate in the annual assessment process; responsible for managing the assessment platform (AEFIS) and publishing resources for users, as well as providing feedback final comments on Assessment Plans and Assessment Reports throughout the cycle

The 2021-22 assessment cycle is as follows, and a visual representation of this workflow can be found on the next page:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workflow Step</th>
<th>Step Name (in AEFIS)</th>
<th>Assigned Role</th>
<th>Submission Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Enter Plan</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
<td>April 9, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Feedback on Plan</td>
<td>Assessment Liaison/OIE&amp;E</td>
<td>May 21, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Draft Report</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
<td>November 18, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Feedback on Report</td>
<td>Assessment Liaison/OIE&amp;E</td>
<td>December 16, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5</td>
<td>Revise/Finalize Report</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
<td>January 13, 2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 6</td>
<td>OIE&amp;E Final Comments</td>
<td>OIE&amp;E</td>
<td>February 3, 2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 7</td>
<td>Acknowledge Final Comments</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
<td>February 10, 2023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Not all units/divisions have appointed Assessment Liaisons who provide internal feedback. In some cases, the Assessment Liaisons are the individuals who enter Assessment Plans and Reports.
# 2021-2022 Support Unit Assessment Workflow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2021 (Plan)</th>
<th>2022 (Draft Report)</th>
<th>2023 (Final Report)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deadline:</strong> April 9, 2021</td>
<td><strong>Deadline:</strong> November 18, 2022</td>
<td><strong>Deadline:</strong> January 13, 2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Completed by:</strong> May 21, 2021</td>
<td><strong>Completed by:</strong> December 16, 2022</td>
<td><strong>Completed by:</strong> February 3, 2023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Step 1:** Program Coordinator submits Plan
  - Click Submit

- **Step 2:** Liaison/OIEE* provides Plan feedback

- **Step 3:** Program Coordinator submits Report draft
  - Click Approve & Submit

- **Step 4:** Liaison/OIEE* provides Report feedback

- **Step 5:** Program Coordinator revises & submits final Report
  - Click Approve & Submit

- **Step 6:** OIEE provides final comments on Report

- **Step 7:** OIEE provides final comments on Report

- **Step 8:** Program Coordinator acknowledges final comments
  - Click Approve & Submit

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*OIEE provides feedback to units that do not have a designated internal liaison.
Using AEFIS to Document Annual Assessment

Getting Started

Program Coordinators responsible for the submission of Assessment Plans and Reports are called Program Coordinators in AEFIS. Program Coordinators use their NetID and password to log in to AEFIS (tamu.aefis.net).

New users can request access via the form found here.

 Newly appointed Program Coordinators should refer to the AY21-22 AEFIS User Guide for instructions on logging in, accessing, and submitting Assessment Plans. This visual guide includes helpful tips, things to remember, and information about system features that Program Coordinators may find useful (such as using Tasks and Notes to communicate with other Program Coordinators). The following information covers the basics of documenting assessment in AEFIS.

Accessing Assessment Forms

Assessment forms assigned to Program Coordinators will appear in the Action Items list on the right side of the screen in AEFIS. Click the blue pencil icon to edit the information in the assessment form.

*If the Action Items list does not automatically appear, it can be accessed by clicking on the bell icon at the top right of the screen in the blue bar:*

Please pay particular attention to the academic year listed on the form in which you are working. At any given time, there are two active assessment cycles — the cycle for which the Plan is being documented and the cycle for which assessment data is being collected and the Report is being documented. Sometimes those forms will be visible in the Action Items list at the same time. Program Coordinators should verify they are working in the intended form.

Upon opening the 21-22 assessment form for the first time, Program Coordinators will find information is already entered in some fields. The following information has been pre-populated in the 21-22 forms (from the 20-21 forms)\(^4\):

\(^4\) New units will not have any information pre-populated in their 21-22 forms.
• In the Department/Unit Purpose section, the “purpose of the unit” text
• All Outcomes/Objectives
• All Measures and Targets that were entered under existing Outcomes/Objectives

**Submitting Assessment Forms**

Over the course of the assessment cycle, Program Coordinators will submit the Assessment Plan once (Step 1) and the Assessment Report twice (Steps 3 and 5). See page 8 for a graphic representation of the assessment cycle.

Upon submitting the 2021-22 Plan, it will be sent to the Assessment Liaison/OIE&E for feedback. Simply click the “I’m Finished, Submit” button at the bottom of the form to submit it.

An additional step is required for all submissions *after* the initial submission. There will be two additional buttons above the “I’m Finished, Submit” button: Approve Form and Reject Form. **In order to successfully submit the form, Approve Form must be selected first.** This button indicates the form should move to the next step in the workflow. The Reject Form button indicates the form should move back a step in the workflow. Program Coordinators will likely not use the Reject Form button very often, if at all. For example, it may be used in rare cases when the Assessment Liaison asks for the form to be sent back to them.

**NOTE:** After receiving feedback on the Assessment Plan from the Liaison/OIE&E (i.e., when the form is at Step 3), Program Coordinators may update the Department/Unit Purpose, Outcomes, Measures, and/or Targets as they see fit. **However, the form should NOT be submitted again until after the Assessment Report (Findings and Use of Results) information is entered in Fall 2022.** Simply use the “Continue Later” button to save any changes made to the form. The form will conveniently remain in the Action Items list over the course of the academic year as assessment data is gathered.

**Accessing Submitted Assessment Forms**

After the Program Coordinator submits a form it will no longer appear on their Action Items list. However, Program Coordinators can view read-only copies of submitted forms from their AEFIS
dashboard widget labeled *My Data Collection Forms*. Simply click the three-dot icon at the top right of the widget and filter by “In Progress Forms.”

![Dashboard widget labeled My Data Collection Forms.](image)

**Reviewing Form History**

AEFIS tracks the changes made within assessment forms and the progression of assessment forms through the workflow. While in a form, you can review this information by clicking the clock icon at the top right of the screen (pictured above).

The resulting menu has two sections:

**Form Actions**

This section shows the submission history of the form, including date, time, whether the form was sent forward in the workflow (*Action: Proceed*) or backward (*Action: Rejected*), and by who.

**Form Update History**

This section shows a list of dated sessions in which the Program Coordinator, Liaison, and/or OIE&E staff member was making edits in the form. Each session is date-stamped and labeled with the user’s name.

Click the upward pointing arrow next to a particular session to expand that section. This view will show each individual change that was made in the form (timestamped). Clicking on an individual change/update will automatically navigate you to that section.

This is a particularly useful feature if more than one Program Coordinator is responsible for entering information in the assessment form. It provides a total history of what has been entered, when, and by whom.
Email Notifications

When feedback is submitted to Program Coordinators—whether from the Assessment Liaison or from OIE&E staff—the system automatically sends an email notification indicating that an assessment form is available on the Program Coordinator’s Action Items list. The sender of these notifications is listed as “The Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Evaluation,” but the notifications are sent automatically by the AEFIS system. Please read these email notifications carefully as they provide important information, such as who provided feedback, next steps and future deadlines, and technical information about the AEFIS system.

NOTE: If you have a student email address (@email.tamu.edu) in addition to a work email address (@tamu.edu), you may need to forward these notifications from your student account to your work account. AEFIS receives a nightly update from the University’s Student Information System, during which student email addresses overwrite work email addresses. Therefore, if you do not believe you are receiving these notifications please check your student email account and set up the forwarding function.
Department/Unit Purpose

In this section of the Plan, Program Coordinators are prompted to provide the following:

1. A summary of the purpose of the unit, which may resemble a mission statement
2. The primary group(s) the unit serves (e.g., unique student populations, faculty, prospective students, etc.)

If the unit only serves students at their specific geographic location (e.g., College Station, Galveston, Qatar, Fort Worth, etc.) this should be noted. Be sure to indicate if the unit serves students at multiple locations (i.e., distance education students or students at approved off-site locations).

FAQs

Q: Information from the unit’s 20-21 assessment form is already populated in the “Purpose of the unit” text box. Can we just leave it as it is?

A: The existing information as it pertains to the purpose of the unit can be left where it is, but Program Coordinators are encouraged to refer to the 20-21 forms to see if there was any feedback provided in which revisions were suggested. Information about group(s) served by the unit should be moved to the appropriate text box.

Q: What are “unique student populations”?

A: Unique student populations primarily refers to distance education students and students at alternate geographic locations (i.e., students taking courses away from the “home” campus/site), among other characteristics (e.g., other populations based on demographic characteristics). Units responsible for providing or overseeing the provision of support services to all TAMU students (regardless of mode of program delivery or geographic location) should clearly state this. Alternatively, units responsible for providing or overseeing the provision of support services only to local students should clearly indicate this as well.

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5 In the event services are provided through contracts or alternative means, please include that information here as well.
Outcomes/Objectives

The primary purpose of assessment is to continually improve the effectiveness and efficiency with which the unit operates and/or provides services to stakeholders. This process begins with an examination of the unit’s core outcomes. Strong outcomes identify these key services and operations and define what they would look like in a high-functioning unit.

All support units are expected to establish a minimum of three outcomes that comprise the unit’s comprehensive Assessment Plan. However, these outcomes may be assessed on rotation. Leadership and staff should determine the most meaningful course of action for annual assessment, whether that means focusing on one outcome or on multiple outcomes. Some divisions may have specific internal requirements regarding outcomes that are to be assessed. Units are expected to meet the minimum requirement of assessing at least one outcome per assessment cycle.

Types of Outcomes/Objectives

Support unit Assessment Plans are comprised of outcomes related to stakeholder/customer perceptions and efficiency, effectiveness, or reach. Units that directly support students and/or faculty in their educational programs or the enrichment of the overall college experience should also include outcomes that are clearly related to student and/or faculty success. Units that employ student workers or support student involvement in campus activities may find it useful to assess student learning outcomes and are encouraged to do so. More information about types of outcomes is presented below.

1. Stakeholder/customer perceptions
   Support units are encouraged to assess at least one stakeholder experience outcome (either annually or on rotation). Feedback from stakeholders is a rich source of information for determining how the unit can further improve its services and functions.

   Example:
   Participants will be satisfied with the high-quality trainings offered by the unit.

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6 “Outcome” and “objective” are used interchangeably throughout this manual.
2. Efficiency, effectiveness, or reach
Outcomes related to efficiency, effectiveness, and reach are about the quality of services provided and the extent to which those services are used by stakeholders.

Examples:
*The unit will respond to all inquiries and requests in a timely manner.* (Efficiency)
*The unit will produce meaningful, digestible reports for various stakeholders.* (Effectiveness)
*The unit will continue to increase the number of students utilizing [specific service].* (Reach)

3. Student and/or faculty success
Academic and student support units should identify and assess outcomes that are clearly connected to faculty and/or student success. **If it may not be immediately evident to someone outside the unit how an outcome is connected to student/faculty success, please provide a brief, clear explanation of the connection.** Outcomes related to stakeholder perception and effectiveness, efficiency, and reach may also address student/faculty success.

Examples:
*Students who utilize the services offered by the unit will achieve a higher level of academic success than students who do not utilize these services, as indicated by grades, retention, and graduation rates.* (Student success)
*The unit will provide high-quality trainings for faculty that will enhance their classroom processes and communications.* (Faculty success)

4. Student learning
Units that serve students directly (e.g., employ student workers or graduate assistants, host student educational activities, provide student trainings and workshops) are encouraged to assess relevant student learning outcomes. These outcomes might align with the University undergraduate and graduate-level outcomes, or they might be specific to the content of a particular training or workshop.

Examples:
*Students who participate in [training/workshop] will report improved understanding of [topic].*
*Student workers who participate in the [event/service/training] will demonstrate high-quality oral communication skills.*

Though it is only required that unit assess one outcome in a given cycle, the expectation is that the comprehensive assessment plan (in which outcomes may be assessed on rotation) include each relevant type of outcome.
Relevant Associations

For each outcome in the Plan, Program Coordinators are prompted to select Relevant Association(s) from a dropdown menu in AEFIS. This menu lists the six priorities in the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.

Please only select Relevant Associations directly related the outcome/objective. If none of the listed Relevant Associations are closely aligned it is acceptable to leave this field blank.

Criteria

1. **Outcome focuses on ongoing process/programming rather than completion of a definitive project**

   The assessment process should not be used as a way to track project management. Thus, the outcomes should focus on things like satisfaction, accuracy, efficiency, reach, etc. – NOT on completion of a task or project. See above for examples of appropriate outcomes.

FAQs

**Q:** *Why can’t we include outcomes about completing a task or project?*

**A:** If the unit is working toward completion of a project or task, the focus of the outcome should be on the *impact* of the completed project or task (i.e., effectiveness, efficiency, or stakeholder/customer perception). Outcomes that can be measured dichotomously (e.g., “Completed/Not Completed”) do not typically provide sufficient insight or information to guide continuous improvement efforts, nor do they fit the cyclical assessment process facilitated by this reporting structure.
Q: Do we have to measure the same outcomes every year? / Can we measure the same outcomes every year?

A: Unit staff and leadership should guide the assessment process, determining which outcomes are to be measured and when. Some units place their outcomes on two- or three-year rotations, focusing on just one or two outcomes in a given year. In any case, assessment planning should be an intentional process. For some units this might mean measuring the same outcomes annually, and in other units this might mean measuring outcomes on rotation. Even units that assess their outcomes on a planned rotation might need to deviate from their rotation from time to time, depending on the current needs of stakeholders or changing priorities.

Q: Regarding the selection of Relevant Associations, is it better to indicate all that are somewhat associated or to be more selective?

A: The selected Relevant Associations should be as closely aligned to the outcome as possible. If two associations are closely related to the outcome, both may be selected. Conversely, you might that none of the Relevant Associations directly align with the outcome, in which case no selections should be made.

Q: If we plan to make significant changes to one of our outcomes, should we revise the existing outcome or add a new outcome in the assessment form?

A: If the revision is one that will fundamentally change how that outcome will be measured (e.g., changing a Customer Satisfaction outcome to an Operational Efficiency outcome), always add a new outcome instead of simply revising the existing outcome. This ensures that the old version of the outcome remains intact and tied to its relevant measures in assessment forms from previous cycles. Add the new outcome and simply de-select the old outcome to indicate that it will not be assessed in the current cycle. These outdated outcomes can be permanently deleted later on.

Q: We are adding a new outcome—what should we enter in the Outcome Code field in the assessment form?

A: The Outcome Code should be a unique identifier no more than 20 characters long. All Outcome Codes should begin with the division code and unit code, separated by a dash, and end with characters that will make it easy to identify the focus of the outcome. For example, Student Life Studies in the Division of Student Affairs might include a Client Satisfaction outcome, for which an appropriate outcome code might be “DSA-SLS-SATISFY”. Refer to the outcomes that were pre-loaded into the assessment forms at the start of the cycle for the appropriate division and unit codes.
Measures & Targets

A **measure** describes the methods of collecting and evaluating assessment data. A strong measure description makes the assessment strategy easy to follow for an external party who is not intimately involved in the day-to-day operations of the unit. The Measures section can be thought of as a miniature methods and data analysis section of a research paper.

A **target** is the level at which a unit considers their outcome to be “met” on a given measure. Strong targets are clear, static levels of achievement.

Measures and targets are reviewed based on the criteria described below.

**Criteria**

1. **Source of data and intended use is clear**

   The information in each measure description should provide a clear picture of (1) where the data are coming from and (2) how the data are to be evaluated and reported. Many processes for measuring outcomes are automated (e.g., software that generates a number, results extracted from a database such as Compass). In such cases simply indicate the primary source of data and the format in which they will be reported (number, percentage, average, etc.).

2. **Measure is consistent with the outcome as defined**

   This criterion focuses on the **alignment** of the measure with the targeted outcome. That is, is the measure capable of adequately capturing achievement of the outcome as it is defined? Also consider whether the methodology is appropriate given the description of the outcome. The measure(s) should be reflective of sound assessment practices, designed to provide usable and interpretable results for continuous improvement at the unit level.

3. **Target(s) include the minimally acceptable performance level**

   Strong targets have the following characteristics: (1) Alignment with the measure and outcome in terms of language and specificity, and (2) the minimally acceptable performance on the measure. The level at which the targeted outcome is determined to be “met” or achieved should be clearly stated. For example: *80% of students will select that they either Agree or Strongly Agree that the training improved their mentoring skills.*

4. **All referenced or relevant documents are attached or sufficiently described**

   Surveys, spreadsheet templates, sample reports, rubrics, or other instruments used for data collection and reporting may be attached to the assessment form in AEFIS as supporting documentation. Alternatively, the Program Coordinator may instead choose to provide a
detailed description of the instrument(s) in the Measure Description text box. For example, if an item on a customer satisfaction survey is used to gather data on a targeted outcome, the unit may choose to attach the survey instrument and indicate the item number, or include in the measure description the exact text of the survey item and the scale on which customers are asked to respond to the question.

**FAQs**

**Q: Can tracking completion of a task be used as a measure?**

**A:** No. If the unit is assessing a specific project or task, the focus of the measure should be on the impact of the completed project or task. Measures that focus solely on tracking completion rates typically do not provide sufficient information for consideration of continuous improvement. As a general rule, measures should reflect methodology that will result in some variability of scores or results over time (e.g., not a “Yes/No” or “Complete/Incomplete” result).

**Q: Should we use more than one measure to assess an outcome? Do we have to use more than one measure?**

**A:** Depending on the outcome and the scope of the measure, a single measure might only provide limited information about the extent to which an outcome is achieved. Very broad outcomes might call for two or three measures in order to determine whether the outcome was achieved or not. Units are encouraged to use multiple measures to assess outcomes as doing so will provide a more complete picture of effectiveness and/or efficiency of unit processes. As a byproduct, utilizing multiple measures will help facilitate conversations about continuous improvement.

**Q: Do the file names of uploaded supporting documents matter?**

**A:** The file name of a supporting document should be descriptive enough that it is clear to a reviewer how it relates to the measure to which it is connected. If supporting documents are sometimes revised year to year, we suggest instituting a naming convention that includes the assessment cycle to which the document is relevant. Documents linked to measures in assessment forms from the
previous cycle are carried forward into the new assessment forms every year (accessible from the ‘Manage Artifacts’ menu at the top right of the form), so using this kind of naming convention will make it easier for new Program Coordinators to see the historical record of assessment-related documents.

Q: What are some examples of strong targets?

A: Below are some examples of acceptable targets. Keep in mind these examples are generically worded; units should include contextual information from the measure description in their targets.

- 75% of service requests will be acknowledged within 24 hours.
- 85% of workshop participants will indicate that they are either Satisfied or Extremely Satisfied with the content of the workshop.
- Female student enrollment in this activity/event will increase 15% from last year.
- 90% of reports will be submitted on time.
- Demographics of students participating in this experience will match the demographics of students on TAMU campus (list percentages).

Q: How often, if at all, should targets be revised?

A: Program faculty should revisit targets annually and revise them as necessary, particularly if the targets are met year after year. Targets that are consistently met year after year may also be a sign that other methods of measuring the outcome should be explored. It is considered good practice to rely on multiple measures for evidence of a PLO.

Q: Do we have to justify our targets?

A: Although not mandatory, including a brief description of the origins or rationale for each target will likely prove to be beneficial in the future when targets are being reviewed and/or when other individuals become involved in the assessment process. These explanations are particularly useful when targets are based on state standards and other requirements.

Q: We have more than one target for one of our measures—how should we indicate this in the assessment form?

A: At the bottom of each Measure & Target section there is an “+Add Target” button. Additional Target text boxes can be added using this feature. If multiple targets are created for a measure, remember to report the results for each target when the time comes to enter Findings.
Findings

Findings are the results from analysis of assessment data. Strong Assessment Reports will consistently communicate findings in a clear manner using language that aligns with the related measure and target.

In addition to the findings statement itself, units are prompted to select the appropriate designation (called the target status indicator)—whether the target was Met, Not Met, or Partially Met—from the provided dropdown menu in the form. Please see the FAQs section for information about the appropriate use of Partially Met.

If there are no findings to report for a given measure/target, units may select a fourth target status indicator—No data collected/reported. If this option is selected please provide a brief explanation in the appropriate text box.

Findings are reviewed based on the criteria described below.

Criteria

1. Discusses the current findings as they relate to previous assessment findings or other relevant trends

The main findings are reported in the “Findings” text box in the AEFIS assessment form. There is a second text box in which units are prompted to briefly reflect on the implications of the findings and how the current findings compare to past assessment findings. Comparisons to past findings should be made, if possible, because the longitudinal pattern of findings can provide valuable information about how the units outcomes have been achieved over time. If the outcome is newly assessed and there are no previous results, simply provide a brief discussion about the meaning of the results.

2. Specific/unique populations(s) served is/are explicitly discussed (if applicable)
Academic and student support units are required to identify the ways in which they provide support to different unique student populations and/or how unique student populations experience the services provided by the unit. **Findings should be disaggregated for the identified unique student population(s).** If the central unit is responsible for providing services to students at alternate geographic locations, the Assessment Report should reflect this by either including measures used specifically for assessment at other locations or by disaggregating the results of measures used across locations. See FAQs for more information.

**FAQs**

**Q: What does ‘Partially Met’ mean and when should it be used?**

**A:** Partially Met should ONLY be used when reporting findings for compound or complex targets. **For example:** A unit uses a customer satisfaction survey on which two specific items are considered evidence of achievement of their customer satisfaction outcome. The target states that 80% of customers will respond with either Agree or Strongly Agree on each item. The results show that 85% of customers agreed or strongly agreed on the first item, but only 78% of customers agreed or strongly agreed on the second item. This target would be Partially Met. **Partially Met should not be used if the Target was close to being met.**

**Q: All of the targets were met, which is an indication that the unit is functioning well. Can we just say that in our reflection about the findings?**

**A:** Saying the findings are an indication that the unit is functioning well is essentially the same as indicating the target is Met. The reflection should go one step further by contextualizing the results. This can be done in a variety of ways, but one of the most powerful ways to discuss the meaning of results for continuous improvement is to describe the longitudinal trend. How has the unit performed on this outcome/measure over the past few assessment cycles? Is progress being made? If not, to what might staff attribute this trend?

**Q: How should finding statements be structured?**

**A:** There is not a prescribed template all finding statements must follow. However, the following is a template units might find useful:

- **First sentence:** Present the assessment results in the context of the measure (e.g., *86% of respondents indicated that they were either Satisfied or Extremely Satisfied with the training session.*).
- **Second sentence:** Reiterate the target, stating whether it was met, not met, or partially met (e.g., *The target of 80% indicating they were Satisfied/Extremely Satisfied was met.*).
- **Third sentence (second text box):** Contextualize the results by discussing longitudinal data trends, presenting other supporting data (if available), and/or by reflecting on whether results were surprising or affirming and why.
Q: Does our unit have to disaggregate results by location? What if we don’t have location data for some of our measures?

A: Academic and student support units are required to disaggregate assessment results by location if they are responsible for serving students at alternate geographic locations. These units should ensure there are measures in place to assess services at all locations for which they are responsible; however, it is fine to include measures that only assess services at the centrally-located office/department. In addition, all academic and student support units should disaggregate results by demographic groups when possible.

Q: Our unit doesn’t serve students at other locations. Do we have to disaggregate our results?

A: All academic and student support units should disaggregate results by demographic groups when possible. Standard disaggregations include race/ethnicity/URM status and gender. Others include first generation status, graduate vs. undergraduate students, and/or any variety of group comparisons as applicable to the services provided within the unit. Units looking at faculty success, specifically, might disaggregate based on college or rank.

Q: What kind of supporting documentation should be uploaded and linked to the Findings section(s)?

A: Supporting documentation in the Findings section is optional. Some units may find it useful to upload documents that further illustrate their findings (reports, charts and graphs, raw data, etc.), as AEFIS then becomes a central location for that information from year-to-year. Please ensure uploaded documents do not include any identifying information. This documentation can be uploaded in the same place as the Measures documentation.
Use of Results for Seeking Improvement

Developing and implementing actions based on assessment results is a process called continuous improvement. Participation in continuous improvement communicates a commitment to the enhancement of the unit’s provided services and functions to meet the needs of stakeholders and support the mission of the University.

The action(s) discussed in the Use of Results section of the Assessment Report should have a close, clear connection to the data collected during the assessment cycle.

Use of Results are reviewed based on the criteria described below.

Criteria

1. Specific action is described

The Use of Results description should clearly articulate a specific course of action designed to improve the targeted outcome. There should be enough detail provided that an external reviewer is able to understand which findings informed the action and what specific changes are being made to affect positive change in achievement of the outcome. *If any gaps are identified (e.g., between locations, identified groups, etc.) once results are disaggregated, strategies for reducing these gaps should be the focus of at least one of the unit’s data-informed actions.* See FAQs for additional information.

2. Indicates relevance to a targeted specific/unique population (if applicable)

Units that support student and/or faculty success are required to identify the ways in which they provide support to different unique student populations and/or how unique student populations experience the provided services. If there are disparities, those disparities should be addressed. If not, the unit should communicate how the action might affect the various student populations they service (with particular emphasis on distance education students and students at alternate geographical locations, if applicable).

FAQs

**Q:** Do we have to submit an action for every finding in the Assessment Report?

**A:** No. However, ideally, units will be prepared to address outcomes for which targets were not met. During the planning stage staff should consider the unit’s capacity for engaging in continuous
improvement. For example, units that plan to assess four or five outcomes in a given year should be prepared to determine appropriate actions for all of the outcomes should all targets be unmet.

**Q: Can the action be a change to the unit’s assessment strategies?**

**A:** A change to the assessment strategy is different from a change designed to strengthen a particular outcome. However, changes to measurement strategies and/or to the overall assessment process can be added as supplemental actions if the unit wishes to do so.

**Q: How do we write an action when all of the targets are met?**

**A:** Met targets are a sign that the unit is functioning well and that the established outcomes are achievable. It does not mean, however, that all of the work is done and there is no further need for assessment or attention to continuous improvement. Therefore, the unit should still consider how the collected data can inform continuous improvement efforts. Possible approaches include, but are not limited to:

- Drilling down into the results further, perhaps by demographics or by some other dimension, in an effort to identify possible gaps or disparities.
- Adjusting the target
  - *If the unit chooses to pursue this strategy, it is critical to include a discussion of what the unit will do in order to meet the new target. This keeps the focus of the data-informed action on the change rather than simply on updating the target (which would be considered a change to the assessment strategy).*

**Q: If we plan to implement a number of different actions, how should we document this in the assessment form?**

**A:** As long as it is clear which findings are informing each action, it is up to the unit how to document actions in the Use of Results section. We recommend using the “+Add Use of Results” button to add a new section for each outcome for which an action will be implemented.
Status Update on a Previously Identified Action

In this section of the Report the unit is prompted to identify a previously implemented action and provide an update on that action. In this update, the unit should explain what changes, if any, have been seen in the assessment results since the implementation of the action. If the action has not yet been fully implemented, describe in detail where the unit is in the implementation process and when staff expect to re-assess the targeted outcome.

Criteria

1. **Status update on a previously identified action is provided**

   Provide a summary of the previously identified action. Describe the specific action that was taken, which Assessment Report it was from (including the assessment findings that prompted it), and which outcome(s) the action was intended to improve.

2. **Action is one that was designed to improve the outcome/objective (i.e., not a change to the assessment process)**

   The action for which a status update is being provided should be one that was designed to improve one of the unit’s outcomes/objectives. That is, it should not be an action that was focused on changes made to the assessment process. It is expected that a unit’s assessment strategies will change over time as the unit develops and evolves, but those changes are reflected in the Assessment Plan each year and thus should not be updated here.
3. **Discusses the impact of the action to date**

Consider the impact the action may have had on the outcome results. Whether results were improved or not improved, reflect on what role the action may have played and discuss how the unit aims to further improve outcome achievement in the future.

When possible, clearly state the *specific* results of the subsequent outcome assessment and how these results compare to the previous findings (i.e., the specific findings which prompted the action in the first place). Avoid vague statements such as “the target wasn’t met in the previous report.” Be as specific as possible: *In the AY19-20 Report, 68% of help requests were solved within three business days but after implementing the action and re-assessing the outcome we found that the percentage of help requests solved within three business days increased to 75%.*

**FAQs**

**Q: What if there was no improvement in the targeted outcome?**

**A:** The purpose of this process is to engage in and provide evidence of seeking improvement. There are no repercussions for unmet targets or unimproved assessment findings. In cases where improvement was not observed, this is valuable information in and of itself. Reflect on what might be done differently in the future to guide improvement.

**Q: What if we don’t have any follow-up results yet?**

**A:** As noted above, if an action has not yet been fully implemented (and if there are no other fully implemented actions on which to provide a status update), describe in detail where the unit is in the implementation process and when staff expect to be able to re-assess the targeted outcome(s).

**Q: What should we write in the Status Update section if our unit is brand new (or new to being formally assessed)?**

**A:** If the unit is brand new as of the current reporting cycle (or if it is new to being formally assessed) there won’t be a previous action on which to provide an update, so the Program Coordinator can simply state this in the text box.

**Q: The unit is using different measures than before, so the pre- and post-action data aren’t directly comparable. Is this an issue?**

**A:** No, this is not an issue. Assessment is not a hard science, so it is not necessary for the methodology to stay the same throughout the process. Assessment itself is a process, so it makes sense for
measures to change as the unit evolves. The unit’s reflection on the efforts made to improve outcomes is more important than ensuring directly comparable assessment results.