Assessment System of the College of Education

Niagara University
College of Education
Table of Contents

1. The Model and Description ........................................... 2
2. Unit Coherence .......................................................... 5
3. Core Assessments ....................................................... 5
4. Program Standards ..................................................... 7
5. Transition points ........................................................ 8
6. Assessment Procedures and Annual Process ....................... 9
7. Data Collection, Analysis and Evaluation ......................... 10
8. Use of Data for Program Improvement ............................ 12
9. Figure 1: Assessment System ........................................ 14
10. List of attachments (links on web) ................................. 15
11. Assessment References ............................................... 16
Assessment System of the College of Education

Assessment is the ongoing process of:

- Establishing clear, measurable expected outcomes of student learning.
- Ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes.
- Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning outcomes matches our expectations.
- Using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning.

Assessment is not a once-and-done process, rather a continuous four-step cycle: (1) establish learning goals, (2) provide learning opportunities, (3) assess student learning, and (4) use the results.


The Assessment System of the College of Education (see Figure 1) is a carefully designed and functional system for collecting, organizing, maintaining, analyzing and utilizing meaningful information that is readily available for the purpose of decision making, planning, and strengthening the unit and programs. It is our belief that the strength and quality of an organization lies within its ability to assess outcomes, continuously improve, and to do so with input from the professional community.

Specifically, the Assessment system has been developed for (a) measuring progress (Unit standards, strategic plan goals, federal and state standards) for accreditation and evaluation, (b) identifying strengths and issues, (c) internal planning, analysis and advocacy (plan for the Unit generally, program areas specifically), (d) measuring candidate performance, and (e) continuous improvement. This system outlines the manner in which we evaluate our success in developing programs that prepare candidates who embody the beliefs, knowledge, and skills outlined in our framework. It also provides a comprehensive and systematic mechanism to analyze Unit operations, plan strategically (in concert with University-wide planning), determine resource needs, and secure additional support for the Unit. The College of Education’s Assessment System represents this continuous process with inputs at multiple levels of the organization and transparent processes for the analysis, discussion and dissemination of data for continuous improvement, planning, and quality assurance.

The Assessment System is aligned with the conceptual framework of the College and professional and state standards. The alignment of the Assessment System to the conceptual framework is depicted in the Assessment System: Conceptual Framework Alignment. The Assessment System includes data related to multiple points of assessment, reflects the involvement of the professional community, and ensures the integration of assessment information and data with other University assessments. As
such, the unit systematically collects, analyzes and uses a broad array of information and data – and views the assessment process as a continuous cycle that aligns assessment to standards and goals and results in the use of data to continuously improve.

The Assessment System, therefore:

- Represents the coordination of data and accountability measures (University-wide coordination with enrollment management, institutional research, information technology, fiscal management, career development);

- Is a comprehensive system that aligns the Unit strategic plan, NCATE Unit standards, standards of the New York State Education Department and Ministry of Education in Ontario, Title II, and university annual reporting requirements;

- Uses multiple indicators and decision points to assess candidate proficiencies as aligned with national, state and institutional standards;

- Reflects the capability of addressing multiple demands for data (current and over time); and

- Examines validity and utility of the data produced and makes modifications in assessments and data reporting, as necessary.

The Dean works directly with the leadership of the University to ensure the coordination of assessment information and data. The Planning and Evaluation Committee of the Unit serves as the overall mechanism to review progress and recommend changes as indicated by the systemic analysis of data, with other standing committees of the College aligned with the assessment of College goals and standards and chairpersons of the Academic Departments responsible for the specific assessment of candidate proficiencies within each of the programs. On an annual basis, through formal assessment retreats and disseminated reports, unit operations and candidate performance are analyzed by faculty to improve the operation of the Unit, its programs and the performance of its graduates. The Assessment System focuses on the use of data for continuous improvement with a plan of timelines for the dissemination of data and discussion of performance (Unit Assessment Collection and Dissemination Plan). Candidate, faculty, and unit assessment data are regularly shared for the purpose of improvement based on the data. Measures are taken to ensure ongoing consistency, accuracy, and fairness in data collection and analysis.

**Unit coherence**

The Assessment System was established based on the unit’s conceptual framework as well as institutional, state, and professional standards. Coherence is demonstrated through this alignment of the Assessment System. Course syllabi illustrate how course outcomes and assessment are aligned with the conceptual framework and with professional standards. Faculty surveys and evaluations, follow-up studies, employer
surveys, and course-embedded assessments are also aligned with the conceptual framework and use the professional standards as the foundation for assessment. The Assessment System also demonstrates coherence with University assessment generally. To ensure this coherence, members of the Unit serve on the University Committees of Planning, Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness. The Assessment System of the Unit draws upon and contributes to University planning and assessment.

**Core Assessments for Unit and Program Quality**

The Assessment System maintains data aligned with the conceptual framework and measures progress and performance (Unit and program levels). Data from core assessments at the Institutional and Unit level, candidate performance, and student learning serve as the foundation for continuous improvement of both Unit and program quality (figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Assessment Indicators for Unit and Program Quality

![Diagram of Unit and Program Quality](chart)

The **Unit Assessment Collection and Dissemination Plan** delineates core assessments that are used, the level of the analysis (Unit or program), and a timetable outlining when assessments are administered and data disseminated. Data are disseminated at the Unit level, with more detailed analyses of candidate performance provided at the program level.

**Institutional and Unit:**

- **NSSE data.** The University uses the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) the measure operations in the following domains: Level of Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, Enriching Educational Experiences, and Supportive Campus Environment. Data are disaggregated for the College of Education and disseminated in the unit.
Indicators embedded in the NSSE data are associated with the conceptual framework, diversity, and technology and benchmarked with the Carnegie Peers and general University. These data have been available from the University during the past three years and are discussed with faculty at the fall assessment retreat.

- Institutional Research. University-wide data generated after the official census date provides core indicators related to admissions, retention, student and faculty demographics. These data, as applied directly to transition points and key performance indicators for the College, are entered into the data system and analyzed and disseminated annually.

- Follow-up surveys (Alumni – one year, Employer survey). The Alumni survey, conducted through the Office of Career Development, assesses the employment and continuing education of graduates (one-year follow-up) and provides a follow-up rating to knowledge, skills, and dispositions within their preparation program. The employer survey seeks input on the early performance of new teachers from Niagara University. The Alumni survey is annual; whereas the Employer Survey is conducted every two years. These data are analyzed, discussed, and disseminated annually.

- FQPD and technology survey. The self-reporting survey, conducted by the Faculty Qualifications and Professional Development (FQPD) standing Committee of the College, identifies annual contributions of the faculty that extend the conceptual framework, application of instructional technology, and ongoing professional development. The surveys are conducted in the spring of each academic year, analyzed and presented in the Annual Report of the College Committee.

- Faculty evaluation, promotion and tenure procedures. The faculty review process (NULTA) provides a strong foundation within the Unit Assessment System for faculty evaluation.

Program:

- New York State Certification Examinations. New York State certification examination pass rates and subtest scores for the LAST, ATS-W, and CST required examinations. Results are entered into the data system by test administration and analyzed on an annual basis (full year of test administrations). Data are analyzed with faculty in both education and arts and sciences.

- Course embedded assessments. Assessments aligned with approved program standards are embedded throughout each of the programs. Required course embedded assessments were included in the individual program reviews (SPA reviews – submitted February 1, 2009). Data are entered into the data system when collected, and analyzed annually. Results of these assessments are reported by Department Chairpersons in their annual report (June) and included for discussion in the fall assessment retreat of the College.

- Diversity assessment. The approved framework for the assessment of diversity embraces Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and links indicators to standards within each program area. Specific course-embedded assessments include these
indicators of diversity within rubrics to measure candidate proficiencies related to the Framework for Diversity that was adopted by the faculty.

- **Assessment of dispositions.** Specific observable indicators for each of the three areas of dispositions of the unit were designed and approved by faculty in each program area. The methodology for the assessment of dispositions (Rinaldo et al.) is incorporated for all programs with faculty assessments of candidates conducted each semester. Validity and reliability measures on the methodology and instrument have been undertaken.

- **Field experience assessments - student teaching, internship.** Evaluations are conducted in all field experiences by classroom teachers, mentor/supervising teachers, and/or university supervisors. In the initial teacher education programs, field experience and student teaching evaluation forms are designed in accordance with program standards and unit disposition. The evaluation forms for advanced internships and/or practica are aligned with standards of those programs as well. Data are also analyzed related to the diversity of placements – these data are analyzed to ensure that all candidates experience a diverse field or clinical experience.

- **Comprehensive examinations and advanced portfolio defense.** Comprehensive examination or culminating portfolio is required for all master’s level programs. As assessments for the program completion transition point, these assessments are aligned with program standards. The portfolio is presented to one Niagara University full time faculty member with specialization in the program area, and a field based practitioner, who is certified and an experienced master teacher in the candidate’s program area.

The analysis of data related to key performance indicators in the Unit are discussed and disseminated in the Annual Planning and Evaluation Report (Part A: Unit Indicators). This report of the Planning and Evaluation Committee is printed and disseminated annually and serves as the core document for the fall assessment retreat of the faculty. The report is also available on the College of Education website for general access.

**Program Standards**

Each program in the College of Education has designated a set of professional standards that define program-level knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The approved professional standards for each program have been confirmed by faculty as follows:

- **Educational Leadership Programs - standards of the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC).**

- **School counseling – standards of the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).**

- **School Psychology – standards of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).**
- Early Childhood and Childhood programs – standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and standards of the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI).

- Middle and Adolescence Education programs (content-specific): Social Studies – National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS); English – National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE); Mathematics – National Council for Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM); Biology and Chemistry – National Science Teachers Association (NSTA); Spanish and French – American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

- TESOL – standards of the Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

- Special Education – standards of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC).

- Literacy – standards of the International Reading Association (IRA).

Each program has 6-8 identified assessments that provide multiple indicators of candidate performance across the program standards. These data are collected regularly and reported annual (Annual Reports of the Department Chairpersons) for discussion and decision-making at the annual fall retreat of the faculty.

**Transition Points**

Each program has established clear transition points that include admission, entry to clinical practice, exit from clinical practice, program completion and follow-up. The Unit uses these transition points as candidates move through the program. Transition points are monitored through the Office of the Assistant Dean, the Department Chairpersons, and Director of Student Teaching. University and Unit Policies are in place to address issues of candidates who are unable to meet the established criteria (e.g., exit from student teaching, graduation requirements).

**Involvement of Professional Community**

Our professional community is intimately involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of the Assessment System. Advisory Council members in each program area review assessments and respective data for both Unit operations and candidate performance. Council members are specifically asked to consider the relationship between assessment measures and candidate success in the respective profession, reviewing data provided through the system on an annual basis. The professional community is further involved in assessment at the implementation level as the assessment includes field based components and completion of employer follow-up surveys, which require practitioners to evaluate candidate proficiencies and program quality.
Assessment Procedures and Annual Process

The faculty in the College of Education is committed to ensuring fairness, accuracy, consistency and the elimination of bias in assessment. Assessments (the instruments, rubrics, and procedures) are designed and approved at the departmental level to begin the process and involve faculty early in the establishment of measures of reliability and validity.

Fairness. Faculty ensure that candidates understand what is expected of them in several ways. First of all, comprehensive course syllabi are provided to candidates – syllabi clearly state assessment expectations, criteria, and expectations for course grading. Secondly, specific information is provided to candidates in program handbooks where specific assessments are outlined with expectations for graduation and certification in the profession.

Accuracy. Faculty have taken steps to ensure that assessments measure what they purport to measure. Assessments are aligned with standards (and learning outcomes). These outcomes are delineated in course syllabi and rubrics are designed for core assessments. As approved by the faculty, rubrics serve as structured scoring guides and are aligned with specific standards of each program. Faculty, in program clusters, meet to review their assessments and continuously strengthen the rubrics that align candidate performance to the standards (and indicators).

Consistency. Faculty ensure consistency by using the rubrics and scoring procedures across courses and programs as appropriate. Faculty participate in reviews and discussions on the use of the assessments and consistent implementation. Measures of reliability have been instituted on assessments such as the dispositional survey (Rinaldo, et. al.), comprehensive examinations (educational leadership – blind reviewers), secondary education comprehensive examination (multiple reviewers), and by comparing results to other internal assessments (counseling process).

Avoidance of Bias. Faculty have taken steps to avoid bias in assessment through consistent scoring of assessments through rubrics and scoring guides (approved by faculty and used by everyone teaching the course) and the use of multiple reviewers and blind reviews for comprehensive and culminating assessments. Steps are taken to eliminate distractions and sources of bias. The Disability Service policy is referenced in all syllabi and faculty work closely with the Office of Disability Services as appropriate.
Data Collection, Analysis, and Evaluation

The Unit has established a system of data collection that is coordinated with all assessment and data functions at the University. The Assessment Secretary for the Unit, coordinates timelines for entering data into the Unit’s data system from Institutional Research, Career Development, Academic Departments, Dean’s office, and the Office of Student Teaching. The Assessment System data checklist is used by the Assessment Secretary to track data sources and timelines for specific data sets.

Regular reports are provided to the University leadership, the Unit, its Advisory Council and professional community on the data produced through assessments. Program faculty and Advisory Council members review these results and consider the validity and utility of the data produced and make determinations about future practice based on this information.

The College of Education works directly with the leadership of the University to ensure the coordination of assessment information and data. The Committee structure, depicted below, has been established to ensure this coordination and on-going integration of assessment into the operation of the Unit.

College of Education Committee Structure

The Planning and Evaluation Committee of the College serves as the overall mechanism to review progress and recommend changes as dictated by the data. The charge of the Committee is to provide leadership for quality across the Unit through planning and
assessment for the College of Education; thereby providing oversight and direction regarding implementation of the assessment plan.

The five committees of the College collect, analyze, and report on specific standards. The committee charges of these formal, standing Committees are aligned with the conceptual framework of the Unit and focus on Unit standards and goals of the strategic plan. The alignment of the Committees to Institutional, State and national standards is illustrated in the Assessment Matrix. Direct linkages are made with partners in the College of Arts and Science and from the Pre-K – 12 systems through the College Advisory Committee and the University’s Education Council of Chairs (Arts and Science and Education).

Unit and program data are presented to faculty at Unit-wide retreats, focusing the annual planning discussion on assessment implications. While data are collected and entered each semester, information is typically reported at the unit and program levels annually. At the annual fall retreat (September of each year), the focus of working sessions is on each of the strategic goals, with data elements presented to faculty prior to the meeting. Unit data is reviewed and discussed at the retreat, leading to Committee deliberations where the appointed chairs and members of the committees formulate their annual agenda based on the key indicators. Similarly, a review of candidate performance data leads into the Departmental meetings of the faculty (fall retreat of each year). The chairs of the College Committees meet regularly to ensure continuity in their work and coordination on objectives, as necessary.

Assessment data are collected, stored and analyzed using the University’s technology platform and logging systems (to ensure protection of data sets). This includes Niagara University’s Colleague system (Datatel platform); the Office of Institutional Research data base, and excel/access data systems that have been established with formula-driven spreadsheets for data (e.g., the shared drive to log, monitor and assess field experiences, and the STEP data warehouse). Continuous updating and modification of the technologies used for the Assessment System takes place to ensure that the newest technologies are incorporated and that the data systems used by the College of Education are University-based systems (i.e., upgrades in the Colleague data system used University-wide, expansion of the STEP data management system for course embedded assessments, and university-based web applications for the shared-drive). It is also important to faculty that the technologies being used for the Assessment System have an “ease of use” consideration so that data collected is accessible for various purposes and reporting requirements. In this regard, faculty in the unit piloted national vendors for the collection of both formative and summative data; however, internal systems were adopted that could be designed specifically to meet our needs. In this way, the Unit could link with existing data systems (and technology
support) on campus and involve faculty in the access of candidate and Unit assessment data.

The Unit has a logging system for effectively maintaining records of formal candidate complaints and their resolutions in the Office of the Dean. The Unit follows the policies of the University regarding student appeals and student rights and responsibilities.
Use of Data for Program Improvement

The Unit is committed to using data to make decisions at the Unit, program, and candidate levels for the primary purpose of improving candidate performance and student learning. Data are shared with University leadership and governance, government leaders, administrators, faculty, staff, school partners and advisory councils to demonstrate the culture of assessment and continuous improvement. Data from candidate performance assessments, certification examinations, follow-up studies, field experiences, unit operations, and institutional research are coordinated and stored on a server within the College of Education and maintained by the College’s Assessment Secretary. Faculty has access to candidate assessment data and other data systems through both electronic means and through more printed reports (University and Unit) that are provided to all members of the faculty. All data reports are readily available to faculty through myNU, the education folder, and the Unit’s website. The faculty and staff portal (myNU) is password protected and contains University data (e.g., reports from Institutional Research, employment reports), Unit assessments, candidate data and all other information in the Datatel (Colleague) system.

Data from the Unit are being used to shape directions, target initiatives (through the Committee structure) and strengthen both the Unit and its programs. The Annual Part A Report of the Planning and Evaluation Committee delineates areas of continuous improvement that occur each year – areas of improvement and data sources used in the analysis are presented and discussed at the fall assessment retreat and disseminated to the Academic Vice President and professional community (website). Specifically, the Unit uses data regularly and systematically to assess progress as aligned with the key benchmarks of the conceptual framework; improve and refine the assessment system (including course-based assessments); improve teaching effectiveness and curriculum (course content, requirements); enhance (or even direct) scholarship; promote service and the mission of the University and assist faculty in their involvement in service (involvement in various types of service, partnerships with P-12 service); direct field experiences and clinical placements; program, Unit and University planning, and advocacy; unit operations; expand and improve partnerships with P-12 schools and the community generally.
List of Related Attachments and Links

- **College of Education Assessment System** *(diagram of system that is included as Figure 1)*

- **Assessment System: Conceptual Framework Alignment** *(alignment of assessment to the conceptual framework of the Unit; including mission, dispositions, constructivism, process-product, reflective practice, diversity, quality of programs, quality of graduates, contributions of faculty, service, partnerships, and specific standards for each program).*

- **Assessment Collection and Dissemination Plan** *(core assessments at the Unit-level and program-level with information on the dissemination of data and timelines)*

- **Assessment System Data Checklist** *(checklist of the Assessment secretary indicating source and date requirements for data)*

- **Annual Planning and Evaluation Report: Part A** *(annual report of key performance indicators for the Unit)*

- **Transition Points** *(admission, entry to clinical practice, exit from clinical practice, program completion, follow-up) for each program*

- **College Committee Charges** *(standing committees – Planning and Evaluation, Program and Assessment, Diversity, FQPD, Field Experience and Partnerships, Advanced Research)*

- **Assessment Matrix** *(alignment of committee charges to Institutional, state, national standards)*

- **Continuous Improvement** *(annual summaries of improvements that have been made and the data used for the discussion/decision).*
Assessment References


