ACADEMIC PROGRAM ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

Updated August 2023

THE INTERNATIONAL

INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT, RESEARCH & PLANNING

Abbreviations & Definitions

AEFIS	Assessment, Evaluation, Feedback, & Intervention System (a cloud-based assessment management system)
DE	Distance Education
FAQs	Frequently Asked Questions
OIARP	Office of Institutional Assessment, Research, and Planning
PLO	Program Learning Outcome
ILO	Institutional Learning Outcome

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Introduction to Academic Program Assessment

Purpose

The purpose of academic program assessment is for program faculty to gather information about what and how students are learning, discuss that information as a faculty group, and use it to inform continuous improvement efforts within the academic program. By extension, these efforts aid in enhancing the educational experience for students, further developing students' skills and knowledge as identified in the PLOs, and actively involving program faculty in the curricular quality improvement process.

Components

The **Assessment Plan**, completed every Spring semester, identifies which program learning outcomes (PLOs) will be assessed during the *upcoming* academic year, as well as the measures and benchmarks that will be used to assess each PLO. Programs may identify as many PLOs as they see fit to assess each year, but **at least two PLO must be assessed annually**. The Assessment Plan consists of the following:

- Program Mission
- Program Learning Outcome(s)
- Measures & Benchmarks

The **Assessment Report** completed every Fall semester, summarizes assessment findings from the data gathered over the *previous* academic year, as outlined in the established Assessment Plan for that year. The Assessment Report also includes the program's action plan. In this section, the program faculty (1) reflect on knowledge gained from the analysis of the findings this assessment cycle, (2) reflect on action(s) taken from previous assessments within this cycle that have been successful, unsuccessful, or provided no change to the findings, (3) describe the action(s) the program faculty will implement in future cycles to improve PLOs or the assessment of the PLOs, and (4) report general issues they believe the dean and/or provost should be made aware of based on their findings.

The Assessment Report consists of the following:

- Findings
- Action Plans

Roles

Over the course of the two-year assessment cycle (see page 4), assessment forms follow a 9-step workflow. Individuals in the following roles participate at one or various points in the cycle:

- **Program Coordinators**: Faculty responsible for documenting and submitting Assessment Plans and Reports in HelioCampus Formerly AEFIS
- **Department Academic Liaisons**: Appointed individuals by the Deans of their respective colleges (most often Department Chairs) who provide support and communicate expectations to Program Coordinators in their respective departments/colleges; responsible for providing the internal departmental review and feedback of the Assessment Plan and Report
- **OIARP**: The University's administrative office responsible for providing support to those in the roles defined above as they participate in the annual program assessment process; responsible for managing the assessment platform (HelioCampus Formerly AEFIS) and publishing resources for users, as well as providing final comments on completed Assessment Plans and Assessment Reports

Guidelines Description

The components making up the Plan and Report are covered individually and in detail throughout this manual. The walkthrough sections of this companion manual follow the same order as the sections comprising the Assessment Plan and Assessment Report.

The information presented in each section of this manual defines Texas A&M International University's expectations for the documentation of PLO assessment. This how-to manual is designed to guide academic programs through this process, highlight best practices, and facilitate the review of Assessment Plans and Assessment Reports.

Each section of this manual includes:

- A description of the assessment component
- Criteria for what each component should include and on which department academic liaisons provide feedback
- Examples
- Frequently asked questions
- Screenshots of what the components look like in HelioCampus Formerly AEFIS

Please pay particular attention to the **callouts** with the red exclamation mark image on the left. These callouts mark important information.

Each section of this companion manual includes a FAQ section. The FAQs in **blue text** indicate information that addresses functionality within the HelioCampus Formerly AEFIS system. The HelioCampus Formerly AEFIS logo on the left marks callouts for important technical information about AEFIS.

Academic Program Assessment Deadlines

Deadlines for the AY2023-24 and AY2024-25 assessment cycles are listed below, and visual representations of these workflows can be found in the Appendices.

AY2023-24 Deadlines

Workflow Step	Step Name (In HelioCampus Formerly AEFIS)	Assigned Role	Step Purpose	Submission Deadline*
Step 1	Program Coordinator Plan Submit	Program Coordinator	Draft Plan Submission	February 17, 2023
Step 2	Department Academic Liaison Plan Checklist	Department Academic Liaison	Internal Department Approval and Feedback on Plan	March 3, 2023
Step 3	Program Coordinator Plan Submit	Program Coordinator	Revise based on Internal Department Feedback/ Submit Plan	March 10, 2023
Step 4	Assessment Office Plan Rubric	OIARP	OIARP Approval and Feedback on Plan	April 21, 2023
Step 5	Program Coordinator Plan Submit	Program Coordinator	Assessment Plan Returns to Program Coordinator for Reviewing Feedback and any Necessary Revisions	September 20, 2024
Step 6	Program Coordinator Report Submit	Program Coordinator	Draft Report Submission	October 04, 2024
Step 7	Department Academic Liaison Report Checklist	Department Academic Liaison	Internal Department Approval and Feedback on Report	October 18, 2024

Step 8	Program Coordinator Report Submit	Program Coordinator	Revise based on Internal Department Feedback/ Submit Final Report	October 25, 2024
Step 9	Assessment Office Report Rubric	OIARP	OIARP Provides Feedback and Approval on Report	November 29, 2024

AY2024-25 Deadlines

Workflow Step	Step Name (In HelioCampus Formerly AEFIS)	Assigned Role	Step Purpose	Submission Deadline*
Step 1	Program Coordinator Plan Submit	Program Coordinator	Draft Plan Submission	February 16, 2024
Step 2	Department Academic Liaison Plan Checklist	Department Academic Liaison	Internal Department Approval and Feedback on Plan	March 1, 2024
Step 3	Program Coordinator Plan Submit	Program Coordinator	Revise based on Internal Department Feedback/ Submit Plan	March 8, 2024
Step 4	Assessment Office Plan Rubric	OIARP	OIARP Approval and Feedback on Plan	April 19, 2024
Step 5	Program Coordinator Plan Submit	Program Coordinator	Assessment Plan Returns to Program Coordinator for Reviewing Feedback and any Necessary Revisions	September 19, 2025
Step 6	Program Coordinator Report Submit	Program Coordinator	Draft Report Submission	October 03, 2025
Step 7	Department Academic Liaison	Department Academic Liaison	Internal Department	October 17, 2025

	Report Checklist		Approval and Feedback on Report	
Step 8	Program Coordinator Report Submit	Program Coordinator	Revise based on Internal Department Feedback/ Submit Final Report	October 24, 2025
Step 9	Assessment Office Report Rubric	OIARP	OIARP Provides Feedback and Approval on Report	November 28, 2025

*The submission deadline denotes when the form needs to be submitted to the *next* workflow step. For example, in the 2023-24 cycle, the deadline for forms at Step 3 to submit to Step 4 is March 10, 2023.

Using HelioCampus Formerly AEFIS to Document Academic Program Assessment

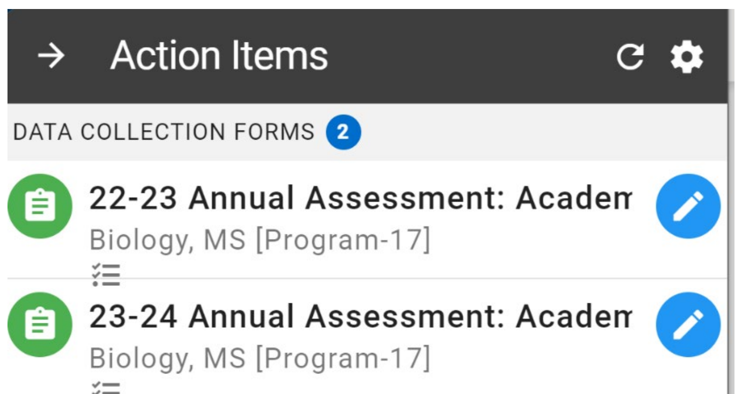
Getting Started

Faculty and staff who are responsible for the submission of Assessment Plans & Reports are called **Program Coordinators** in HelioCampus Formerly AEFIS. Program Coordinators use their NetID and password to login to HelioCampus Formerly AEFIS (tamiu.aefis.net)

Newly appointed Program Coordinators should refer to the HelioCampus Formerly AEFIS User Guide for specific 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. The following information covers the basics of using HelioCampus Formerly AEFIS for program assessment.

Accessing Assessment Forms

Assessment forms assigned to Program Coordinators will appear in the Action Items list on the right side of the browser after logging in to HelioCampus Formerly AEFIS. Click the blue pencil icon to edit the information in the program 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 pictured below.

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 program 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 2023-24 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 2023-24 forms (from the previous year's forms):

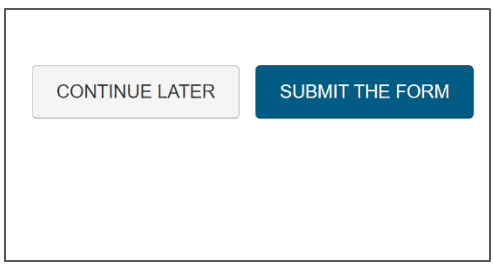
- All Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

New programs will not have any information pre-populated in their 23-24 forms.

Submitting Assessment Forms

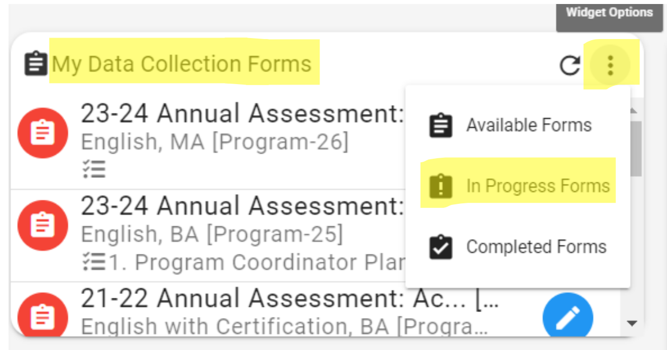
Over the course of the assessment cycle, Program Coordinators will submit the Assessment Plan three times (Step 1, 3, and 5) and Report twice (Steps 6 and 8). See the Appendices for a visual representation of the assessment cycle.

Upon submitting the Plan, it will be sent to the Department Academic Liaison for feedback and approval. Simply click the "Submit the Form" button at the bottom of the form to submit it.



After receiving feedback and approval on the Assessment Plan from the Office of Institutional Assessment, Research, and Planning (i.e., when the form is at Step 5), Program Coordinators may update the Mission, PLOs, Measures, and/or Benchmarks as they see fit. However, **the form should NOT be submitted again until ready to enter the Assessment Report (Findings and Action Plans) information, which won't be until the Fall semester of the NEXT year.** 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.

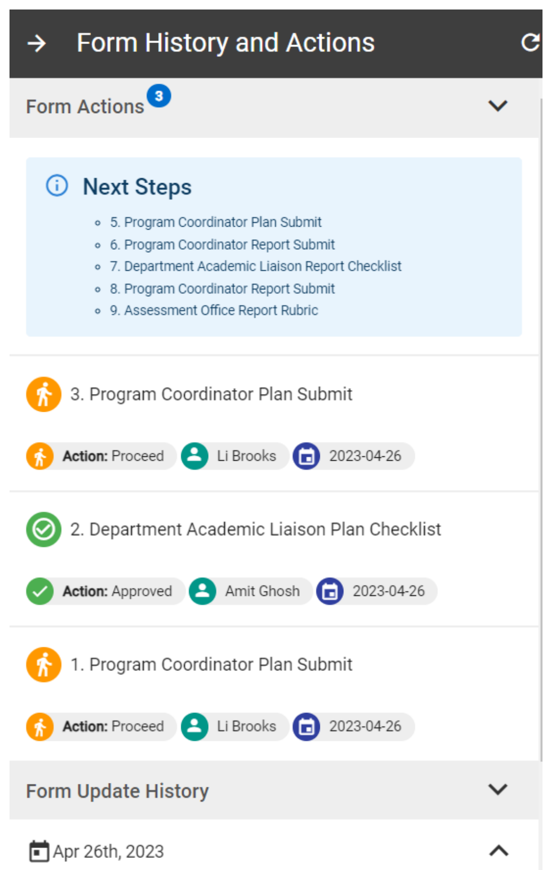
How to Locate Assessment Forms Not Showing on Your Action Items



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."

Completed assessment forms from previous cycles (e.g., AY 21-22, AY 20-21) can also be accessed from this widget. Simply select "Completed Forms."

Form History 



AEFIS tracks the changes made within assessment forms and submission history. While in a form, you can review this information by clicking the clock icon at the top right of the form (pictured above). The resulting menu has two sections:

- **Form Actions.** This section shows the assessment form's submission history including date, time, whether the form was sent forward in the workflow (Action: Proceed or Action: Approve) or backward (Action: Rejected), and by whom.
- **Form Update History.** This section shows a list of dated sessions in which a Program Coordinator, Liaison, or OIARP staff member was making edits to the form. Each session is date-stamped and labeled with the user's name.

Expand a session by clicking the caret (^). 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 of the form.

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 Department Academic Liaison or OIARP 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 "TAMIU AEFIS System," 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.**

If you have a student (@dusty.tamiu.edu) and a work (@tamiu.edu) email address, you may need to forward these notifications from your student account to your work account. AEFIS receives a nightly update from Banner, the University's Student Information System, during which student email addresses overwrite work email addresses. If you do not believe you are receiving notifications, please check your student email account and set up the forwarding function.

Responding to Feedback

Department Academic Liaisons provide feedback on Assessment Plans and Reports twice over the course of the cycle (Steps 2 & 7). Beyond making revisions or updates to the Plan/Report itself, there may be some cases in which the Program Coordinator wishes to respond to the feedback (e.g., perhaps because the recommended revision cannot be made, and the Program Coordinator wishes to provide an explanation).

To respond to the feedback provided in your form, simply type your response in the text box that includes the content on which the feedback was provided. That is, if the Department Academic Liaison provided feedback on a Benchmark, type your response in the Benchmark text box. OIARP recommends *dating* your response, as well as making the text a *different color* so that it stands out from the other content in the text box. See below for an example:

Benchmark

75% of students will score a 3 (competent) on the WIN rubric (attached).

10/20/2022 Response to Feedback: It was asked if we could change the rubric to accommodate and we cannot because...."explanation explanation etc."

Program Mission

In this first section of the Assessment Plan, Program Coordinators are asked to provide their program mission. It is important to consider the institutional, department, and program mission statements. Consider these four statements when developing or refining your mission statement:

1. Institutional missions are the foundation upon which everything we do is based. Departmental mission statements, and in turn program mission statements, should flow from and directly support the overall institutional mission.
2. Accreditors will evaluate how well an institution executes its mission through it academic programs and other endeavors.
3. Assessment planning time provides an excellent opportunity to call our attention back to these statements of who we are and what we are about.
4. The program-level learning goals and outcomes for our assessment plans must be directly related to the program mission.

We want to be able to “connect the dots” all the way back up through the hierarchy to the institution’s mission.

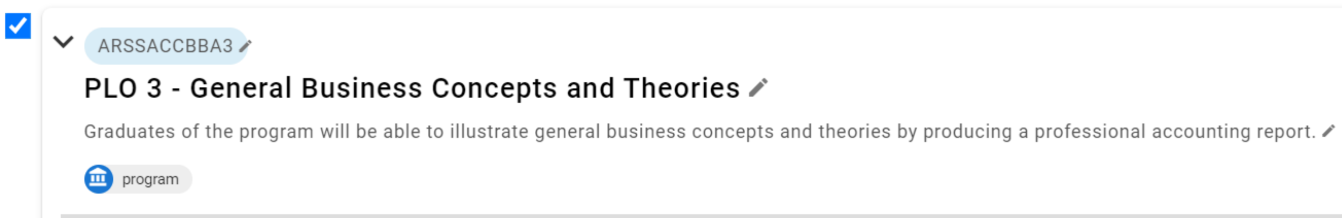
Program Mission FAQs

Q: The program mission from last year’s assessment form is already populated in the text box. Can we just leave it as it is?

A: If the existing information addresses the overall mission of the program(s) it can be left as is. Ensure that if any information has changed to your program that you update the mission to reflect these changes (e.g. changes in delivery mode).

Program Learning Outcomes

A **program learning outcome (PLO)** are a formal statement of what students are expected to demonstrate or articulate by the time they graduate from the academic program and/or complete the requirements for a certificate. Program learning outcome statements refer to specific knowledge, practical skills, areas of professional development, attitudes, higher-order thinking skills, etc. that faculty members and administrators expect students to develop, learn, or master during an academic or certificate program. Simply stated PLOs describe what students should know AND be able to do at the end of their program. See the screenshot below for an example of a PLO entered in AEFIS.

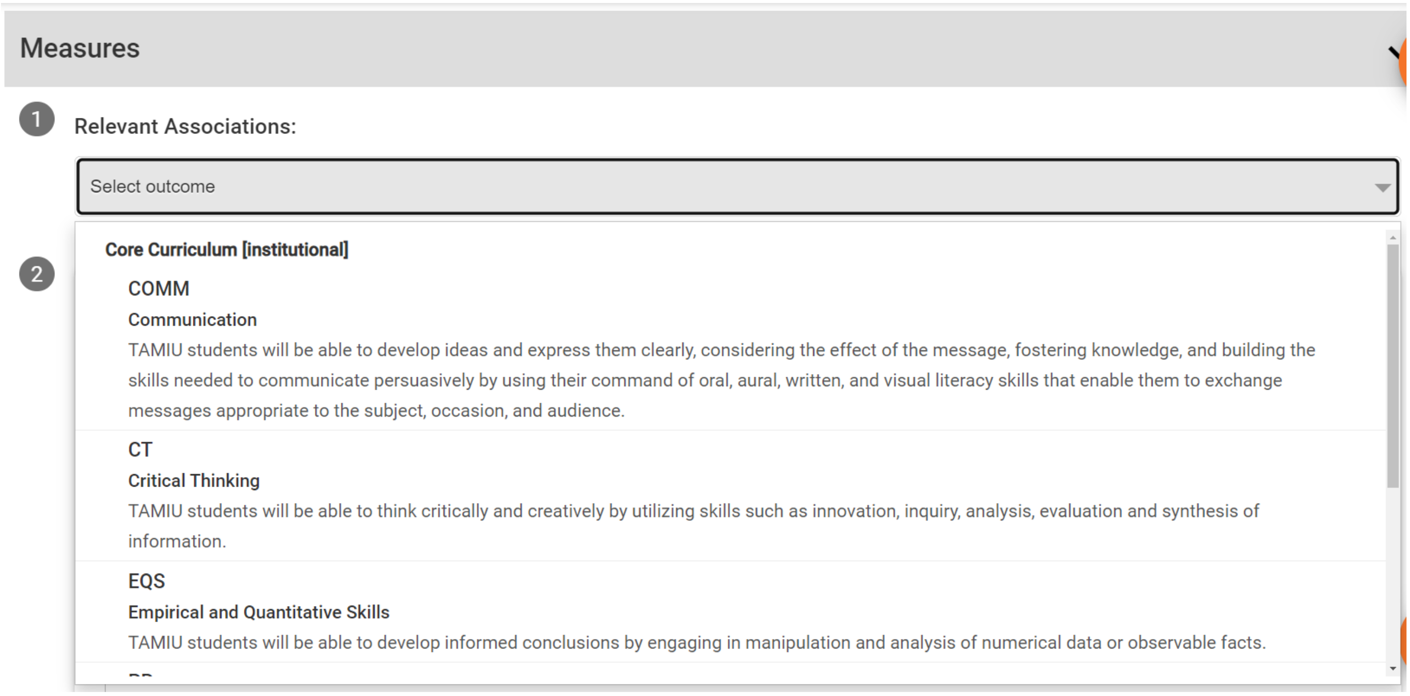


All degree programs are expected to establish a **minimum of three** program learning outcomes (PLOs) to assess within the program's comprehensive Assessment Plan. Academic certificates are expected to establish a **minimum of two** program learning outcomes (PLOs) to assess within the program's comprehensive Assessment Plan. However, these PLOs may be assessed on rotation, and in such cases the program should consider determining that rotation schedule in advance. Programs are expected to meet the minimum requirement of assessing at least two PLOs per cycle, and all PLOs should be tested once within three years.

Relevant Associations

For each objective/outcome in the Plan, Program Coordinators are prompted to select Relevant Association(s) from a dropdown menu in AEFIS. The menu lists the six Institutional Learning Outcomes:

- Institutional Learning Outcomes – TAMIU has identified six learning outcomes which describe the knowledge and skills undergraduate students should possess upon graduation from TAMU. These also apply to undergraduate certificates. These six outcomes match the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) established six skills which prepare students for the job market and their role in a diverse world and democratic society. These skills are introduced and reinforced throughout the Core Curriculum.



Criteria

1. *PLO reflects what students are expected to learn by the end of the program (i.e., program-level, not course-level)*

PLO descriptions should clearly state the specific knowledge and skills *graduates of the program* are expected to possess. A strong PLO is written in clear, straightforward terms and is appropriate to the degree (or certificate) level. Whereas course learning outcomes (CLOs) describe knowledge and abilities students should possess at the end of a course, PLOs describe the broader knowledge and abilities students should be able to demonstrate because of their combined coursework. See the relevant FAQ for an example of how a learning outcome might differ between levels.

2. *Two PLOs are tested in a cycle.*

As stated previously PLO selection per cycle is a minimum of two per cycle. However, all PLOs for a program must be tested once within three years.

3. *PLOs are written clear enough to infer student action and measurability*

PLOs should establish what is expected of the student providing a rich description of the content/skill/or attitudinal domain the student will gain. Additionally, the PLO should contain precise verbs that promote measurability, avoiding vague words (e.g., understand, know, appreciate, etc.).

4. *PLOs specify who should be assessed*

PLOs should specify whom should be assessed, (e.g., "graduating seniors in the Biology B.S. program").

PLO FAQs

Q: Our program is externally accredited, and we are required to assess specific outcomes. Can we put those outcomes in this Assessment Plan?

A: Yes, we encourage accredited programs to ensure close alignment between the annual program assessment process and program accreditation requirements.

Q: Do we have to measure the same PLOs every year? Can we measure the same PLOs every year?

A: Program faculty should guide the assessment process, including determining which PLOs are measured and when. Some programs place their PLOs on two- or three-year rotations, focusing on just two in a given academic year. In any case, assessment planning should be an *intentional* process. For some programs this might mean measuring the same PLOs every year, and in others this might mean measuring them on a rotation. Even programs that assess their PLOs on a planned rotation might need to deviate from their rotation from time to time. Again, these decisions should be driven by faculty and the observations they make.

Q: Can the Assessment Plan include program objectives like participation in educational activities, publication productivity, etc.?

A: The primary purpose of the assessment reporting process is to document student learning. Other objectives and program outputs (e.g., tracking the number of manuscripts submitted by students) may be included as part of the Assessment Plan as *additional* objectives; however, programs should ensure they are meeting the minimum expectation of measuring at least two Program ***Learning*** Outcome annually, and that any programmatic objectives are *in addition to* PLO(s).

Q: What is the difference between course, program, and institutional learning outcomes?

A: Institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) are very broad; they are worded in such a way that they could apply to any academic program. Program learning outcomes (PLOs) should include discipline-specific details that set them apart from broad ILOs, but they are not so specific that only one course in the curriculum addresses the skill or content. Course learning outcomes are very specific, perhaps using language that relates to a particular course assignment or specific activity listed on a course syllabus. Here is an example of a knowledge application outcome at the three different levels:

> *ILO:* Students will apply discipline knowledge in a range of contexts to solve problems, make decisions, and/or reach conclusions.
>
> *PLO*: Students will apply the principles of child development in observational contexts and when presented with case-study scenarios.
>
> *CLO:* Students will apply the principles of child development to various toys available on the market.

Q: Regarding the selection of Relevant Associations, is it better to select all that are somewhat associated or to only select the most closely related ones?

A: The associations should be as closely aligned as possible. That is, each PLO should only be associated with the Relevant Association(s) it most closely resembles. If two associations are closely related to the PLO, both may be selected. One purpose of making these associations is to demonstrate how the program is addressing the university outcomes through its annual assessment practices.

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 Communication outcome to a Critical Thinking outcome, or a Depth of Knowledge outcome that will focus on a different content area), *always add a new outcome instead of simply revising the existing outcome.* This ensures 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.

Q: Can I deselect an outcome (i.e., un-check the checkbox) after I’ve finished entering all the information for it?

A: As long as the outcome is selected/checkmarked again prior to submission, it is fine to de-select the outcome while you’re working. Minimizing an outcome by unchecking it may make the form easier to navigate while you’re actively working in it. However, if you do not remember to select the outcome again, that information will not move forward in your submission.

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

A: The Outcome Code is an identifier no more than 20 characters long. We suggest to name your outcome code your PLO #. Additionally, you can add your program name if you wish, but it is unnecessary.

Measures & Benchmarks

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

A **benchmark** is the level at which a program considers their program learning outcome (PLO) to be "met" or achieved on a given measure. A strong benchmark statement communicates a clear level of achievement.

Types of Measures

There are two types of measures: *direct* and *indirect*. **All PLOs must be assessed with two measures with at least one being a direct measure.** Indirect measures may supplement direct measures, but the focus of the Assessment Plan should be on direct measurement of PLOs. Measures can be either quantitative or qualitative.

Direct measures require students to demonstrate their competency or ability in a way that is evaluated for *measurable quality* by an expert, such as an instructor, assessment professional, internship supervisor, or industry representative. Some examples of direct measures are:

- Written assignments, oral presentations, portfolios, or demonstrations to which a rubric—or other detailed criteria—are applied
- Exam questions written to evaluate a specific outcome
- Scores on standardized exams (e.g., licensure, certification, or subject area tests)
- Employer or internship supervisor ratings of student performance
- Competency interviews
- Other assignment grades based on defined criteria

Indirect measures provide secondhand information about student learning. Whereas direct measures are concerned with the *quality* of student work as it relates to certain PLOs, indirect measures are indicators that students are *probably* learning. Often, indirect measures are too broad to depict the achievement of specific PLOs. Some examples of indirect measures are:

- Tasks tracked by recording completion or participation rates
- Completion of degree requirements

- Number of students who publish manuscripts or give conference presentations
- Survey questions students answer about their own perception of their abilities
- Job placement data
- Focus groups
- Course grades and some exam grades (see FAQs below)

Criteria

1. *The measure aligns with the PLO as defined*

Programs should ensure alignment between PLOs and their measures. For example, if the PLO states students will *articulate* a discipline-specific concept, the measure should describe a written or oral activity through which students define and explain that concept (versus *identifying* the concepts on a multiple-choice exam, for example).

2. *The measure's data collection is clear:*

It is important to clearly communicate *where* data are coming from by including the following information, as relevant: The course designation and/or point in the curriculum when the data is collected, who collects the data (not necessarily by name), etc. Enough detail should be provided to clarify how the measure addresses the PLO as it is defined.

If the program is offered via different modes of delivery (e.g., FTF/online) or if there are multiple credentials included in the same assessment plan (e.g., BA/Concentration), we encourage you to state how the future assessment results will be disaggregated to capture learning in each of these unique conditions. Additionally, if measures differ across these conditions, describe each measurement strategy that will be used.

3. *Benchmark is clear and specific*

Strong Benchmarks have the following characteristics: (1) Alignment with the measure and PLO in terms of language and specificity, (2) the minimally acceptable performance on the measure is identified, and (3) the proportion of students who are expected to reach that performance level is identified.

For example:

- The **PLO** is about synthesizing information from different sources.
- The **measure** is a rubric applied to a research paper. The rubric has the following categories: Introduction of Topic, Literature Review, Methodology, Results, Implications. Each of the rubric categories is defined at the following performance levels: Exemplary, Accomplished, Developing, Beginner. The Literature Review category specifically includes consideration of the level at which students synthesize information from different sources.
- An appropriate **Benchmark** might be as follows: *80% of students will be rated as either Accomplished or Exemplary on the Literature Review category of the rubric.*

Notice that the Benchmark (1) refers to the *specific* rubric category that addresses the *specific* PLO, (2) indicates the minimally acceptable performance level (Accomplished), and (3) identifies the proportion of students that should meet this level (80%).

Additionally, we encourage you to justify your benchmarks. They might be more or less rigorous depending on the degree level or on past student performance. Program faculty should collectively determine appropriate and meaningful Benchmarks.

4. All referenced or relevant rubrics/surveys are attached or sufficiently described

As often as possible, programs should attach instruments used in the assessment process (i.e., rubrics, prompts, surveys, exam items, etc.) as supporting documentation to the Assessment Plan. Supporting documentation can also be added in the reporting phase of the assessment cycle.

Measure & Benchmark FAQs

Q: Why aren't course grades and GPAs considered direct measures?

A: Final course grades and GPAs are very broad metrics. PLOs are much more specific. Although a great deal of instruction in a particular course might focus on developing skills related to one PLO, the course likely addresses a variety of *other* skills and knowledge as well. It is difficult to determine how much of a course grade or GPA is due to how well students demonstrate a single, specific learning outcome. Furthermore, many course grades also include factors like class participation and attendance. The inclusion of these metrics in the final grade or GPA further complicates the determination of how much a course grade captures achievement on a specific PLO.

Q: Why aren't exam grades considered direct measures?

A: Like course grades (see above), comprehensive or multi-unit exam grades are often quite broad. However, some exams focused on specific topics and/or skills can make them candidates for use in direct assessment. When using exam scores, program faculty should always consider which data would be more meaningful as evidence of a specific PLO: a comprehensive exam grade or performance on specific exam items (e.g., essay questions or a grouping of multiple-choice items relating to the same topic).

Q: Should we use more than one measure to assess a PLO? Do we have to use more than one measure?

A: Consider this: Diplomas aren't awarded based on a single exam grade. Relying on one measure to capture collective student performance on a PLO will provide only limited information about the extent to which students are achieving that PLO. Programs are *strongly encouraged* to use more than one measure to assess student ability as this will provide a more complete picture of the curriculum and what students learn in the program. As a byproduct, use of multiple measures will also facilitate conversations about continuous improvement, especially if those measures are taken from various courses.

Q: Why isn't it appropriate to report a comprehensive rubric score as evidence of a PLO?

A: Aggregating scores across categories in a rubric is not inherently problematic. Many multi-criteria rubrics exist in which each individual criterion may directly relate to the overall learning outcome (for example, AAC&U rubrics). However, depending on the specificity of the learning outcome, it might be more useful to report the results for each rubric criterion separately. Breaking down the results like this can uncover gaps in learning that might not have been as obvious in the aggregate score alone. More granular results also make continuous improvement opportunities easier to identify. Additionally, some rubrics may include criteria for unrelated skills. For example, the rubric to evaluate a research paper might include criteria for the Literature Review, Methods, Analysis, and Discussion, but also a criterion for Grammar, Syntax, and Mechanics. If the PLO is specific to research skills, only results from the research-related criteria should be reported.

Q: What are some examples of acceptable Benchmarks that include a specific proportion of students expected to meet the minimally acceptable performance level?

A: Here are some examples of acceptable Benchmarks:

- 85% of students will earn at least 7 out of 10 points on the critical thinking essay question.
- 70% of students will score above the 80th percentile on the ACS standardized exam.
- 75% of students will select that they are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the faculty in their major department on the graduating senior survey.

Q: How often, if at all, should Benchmarks be updated?

A: Program faculty should revisit Benchmarks annually and update them as necessary, particularly if the Benchmarks are met year after year. Benchmarks that are consistently met every 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 the file names of the 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 revised year-to-year, we suggest instituting a naming convention that includes the assessment cycle to which the document is relevant.

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

A: Secondary benchmarks are common in assessment. A secondary benchmark identifies a lower threshold below which we do not want student performance to fall. Secondary benchmarks can be useful in programs with a high percentage of at-risk or developmental students. A secondary benchmark is written in conjunction with the primary benchmark, and indicates that no more than some percentage of students will fall below a certain level on the measure. Secondary benchmarks are optional and not required.

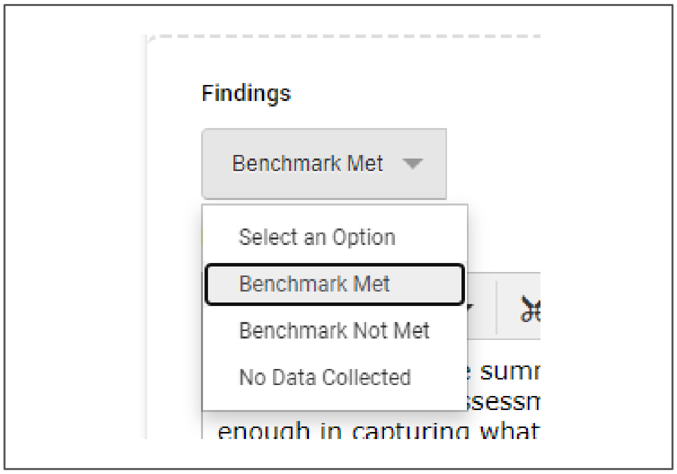
Here is an example of both a primary and secondary benchmark:

- (P) 80% or more of students will earn 75% or higher on [subset of outcome-related test items] on the final exam. (S) No more than 10% of students will earn below 60% on [subset of outcome-related test items] on the final exam.

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 Benchmark.

In addition to the findings statement itself, programs should select the appropriate designation—whether the Benchmark was "Met," or "Not Met,"—from the provided list. As a reminder, programs are *not* penalized if their Benchmark(s) are not met.
What is important with any Benchmark and finding is that there is reflection.



Criteria

1. Benchmark Status Indicator is accurate based on the reported findings

Benchmark Status Indicators are used to indicate whether the Benchmark was "Met" or "Not Met." The findings statement should support the selected indicator. If no findings are reported, "No data collected" should be selected (with an explanation accompanying this selection).

2. Current findings are compared to previous assessment findings and/or other relevant trends

The findings are reported in the "Findings" text box in the AEFIS assessment form. Additionally, in this text box programs should briefly reflect on how the current findings compare to the findings from the last time the PLO was measured. If possible, findings should be discussed in the context of past results, as the longitudinal pattern of findings can provide valuable information to the program. If a mean result is reported, it may be useful to report the sample size along with the mean to provide further context for the finding. If the PLO has not been assessed before, what do the findings imply about student achievement of the outcome? Are there any other contextual factors that might be relevant?

3. Where appropriate, we encourage your findings to be disaggregated (i.e., by program or mode of delivery)

Provided here are some examples of Assessment Reports in which results should be disaggregated:

- The Assessment Report includes two programs with different concentrations (e.g., BA/Education Concentration combined in a single Report)
- The Assessment Report includes two or more programs with different modes of delivery (e.g., a Distance Education program in the same Plan as a face-to-face program)

Programs that fall into any of the two categories listed above (or any combination of the above) are **encouraged** to disaggregate assessment results by these characteristics.

How to Report "No Findings"

If there are no findings to report for a given measure/Benchmark, programs may select No data collected. Appropriate use of this option is briefly described below:

- ***No data collected/reported*****:** There are several valid reasons this option might be selected but it must always be accompanied by a brief explanation. Most often it will be selected if a class did not make, or if there are too few students at the point in the curriculum where assessment data is collected. Additionally, a professor may have unexpectedly left the university.

What constitutes "too few" students?

- Fewer than 2 students for undergraduate degree programs and certificates

- Fewer than 2 students for graduate degree programs and certificates

Programs with **uncharacteristically** low enrollment (or an uncharacteristically small number of students from whom assessment data could be collected) are not required to report assessment results (see numbers above). **Programs that experience *consistently* no enrollment from year-to-year need to meet with OIARP to discuss these issues with the Provost and OIARP.** Please refer to the FAQs section for more information.

Findings FAQs

Q: There is consistently low enrollment in the program—can we *always* select "No data collected/reported" if there are fewer than 2 students on which to report assessment results?

A: No. Only programs that occasionally experience low enrollment or only occasionally assess fewer than 2 students should select this option. Programs with consistently low enrollment must utilize other methods of reporting results. We recommend combining current assessment results with assessment results from the past two or three cycles in which the same measures were used. This creates a larger sample and results in more data on which to base continuous improvement efforts.

Q: All the Benchmarks are met, which is an indication our students are performing well. Can we just say that in the reflection of the past results?

A: Saying simply that the findings are an indication that students are performing well is essentially the same as indicating the Benchmark 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 have students performed on this outcome/measure over the past few assessment cycles? Is progress being made? If not, to what might faculty attribute this trend (this portion will be addressed in the action plan responses)?

Q: How should findings statements be structured?

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

- **First sentence:** Present the assessment results in the context of the measure (e.g., 85% of students achieved at least 3 points on the “Written Communication” rubric criterion).

- **Second sentence:** Reiterate the Benchmark, stating whether it was met, not met, or partially met (e.g., The Benchmark of 80% achieving at least a 3 was met).
- **Third sentence** Contextualize the results by discussing longitudinal data trends, presenting other supporting data (if available), and/or by reflecting on the results.

Q: Should we upload supporting documentation for our findings? If so, what are some examples of appropriate documentation?

A: Supporting documentation for the findings is mandatory. The best supporting documentation is documentation that the program faculty has met to discuss the results, and make decisions based on the results (minutes, email thread, zoom transcript, etc.). Additionally, some programs 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 student information.** You will upload this documentation in the supporting documentation area located below the action plan box.

Q: We identified multiple Benchmarks for one of our measures but there is only one place to report findings for that measure. How should we report our results?

A: Simply address all Benchmarks in the “Findings” text box. We recommend numbering the findings statements based on how many Benchmarks were established (1, 2, 3, etc.). Additionally, feel free to discuss each finding separately or to discuss the findings more holistically. If you wish, you can include multiple Benchmarks in a single Benchmark text box, as well.

Action Plan

Programs engage in ***continuous improvement*** when they use their annually collected assessment data to make changes that will facilitate students' achievement of learning outcomes. Through participation in the annual program assessment cycle, programs demonstrate their commitment to the ongoing, gradual enhancement of student learning and overall improvement of the program for its students.

The action(s) discussed in this section of the Assessment Report should have a close, clear connection to the data collected during the assessment cycle. You will be prompted to answer four questions in each action plan text box.

1. What did program faculty learn from the findings about how effective the program is in achieving this measure?
2. What are some examples of productive new actions taken by faculty to improve the program that generated these results?
3. What steps should be taken to enhance the effectiveness of this measure to improve the program going forward to the next cycle?
4. What are some general issues that emerged in the reading of these findings that the dean/provost should be aware of?

<u>The first three questions are mandatory and must be answered.</u> The fourth question is optional. You can answer the questions in numerical order in the text box or paragraph text, but please be sure all three questions are answered.

Criteria

1. *Previous and future Actions are designed to improve student learning*

   The responses to the questions should clearly articulate a specific course of action taken (question 2) in the previous cycle and actions to take for future cycles (question 3) designed to improve student achievement of a Benchmarked PLO. There should be enough detail provided that an external reviewer is able to understand what the action entails, how the action relates to the Benchmarked PLO, and what the various implementation details are (e.g., responsible party, planned timeline, timeline for re- assessment of the Benchmarked PLO). See FAQs for specific examples of appropriate actions/curricular changes.

When reflecting on previous actions, clearly state the *specific* results of the subsequent PLO assessment and how these results compare to the previous findings (e.g., the specific findings which prompted the action in the first place). Avoid vague statements such as “the Benchmark wasn’t met in the previous report.” Be as specific as possible: *In the AY19-20 Report only 70% of students scored Acceptable on the rubric, but after implementing the action and re-assessing the outcome we found that the percentage of students scoring Acceptable or higher increased to 78%.*

Please note that saying “Monitoring the data” should only be selected in two cases: (1) The program is new enough that no assessment has taken place, and (2) there was *uncharacteristically* low enrollment during the assessment period (see Findings section for more details). This can also only be said for three cycles. By the third cycle, action decisions must be made.

Action Plan FAQs

Q: Do we have to establish an action for every assessment finding included in the Assessment Report?

A: No. Ideally, though, programs will be prepared to address all PLOs for which Benchmarks were not met. During the planning stage, program faculty should consider—to the best of their ability—the program’s capacity for engaging in continuous improvement. For example, programs that plan to assess five or six PLOs in a cycle should be prepared to determine appropriate actions for all of those PLOs should all Benchmarks be unmet.

Q: How specific does an action need to be?

A: The development of an action should be a collaborative decision-making process involving program faculty. It should reflect a systematic response to the findings. This does not mean the action must be a large, resource-demanding overhaul to the program or curriculum. Rather, the action should be specific, identifiable, and should be able to be implemented in a systematic and intentional way. Listing possible curricular changes without committing to a specific action does not demonstrate a clear and intentional use of assessment data for improvement.

Examples of appropriate actions include, but are not limited to:

- A course-level adjustment at any point in the curriculum

- New text, assignments, etc.
- Guest lecturer in a specific course
- New programming or activities designed to enhance and improve PLO results
- A pilot program or initiative
- Prerequisite or other curriculum-based adjustment
- Changes to assignment requirements
- Changes to meeting requirements
- Changes to advising strategies
- Additional required trainings for faculty, staff, or students

Q: Can the action be to change the program's assessment strategy?

A: Changes to measurement strategies and/or to the overall assessment process do fit this criterion and could be added if the program wishes to do so. However, we want to focus that the assessment strategy is not what we should be focusing on as a major means of action. <u>We need to focus major means of action on student learning improvement.</u>

Q: How do we determine an appropriate, intentional action when all the Benchmarks are met?

A: Met Benchmarks are a sign that the established PLOs are achievable. However, it does not mean that all the work is done, and there is no further need for assessment or attention to continuous improvement. Therefore, the program should still consider how the collected data can inform continuous improvement efforts. Strategies for identifying continuous improvement opportunities include but are not limited to:

- Drilling down into the results further, perhaps by demographic information, course section, or some other dimension to identify possible gaps or disparities.
- Adjusting the Benchmark in future Assessment Plans and explaining how faculty will help students meet the higher Benchmark.

If the program's action is to adjust the Benchmark, it is *critical* to include a discussion of what action the program will take to help students meet the new Benchmark. This keeps the focus of the action on a curricular change rather than simply on updating the Benchmark (which would be considered a change to the assessment strategy).

Department Academic Liaisons Approvals

Department leadership should be actively engaged in the program assessment process, particularly when it comes to reviewing assessment data and developing data-informed actions. In addition, department leadership plays an important role in the department approval of Assessment Plans and Reports. The Department Academic Liaison role in the annual Assessment Review process allows Department Chairs (and/or Deans, Directors, or Associate Vice Presidents) to complete a final quality check of Assessment Plans and Reports before they are submitted to OIARP. Department Academic Liaisons will be notified via email when Assessment Plans and Reports are available for review.

Email Notifications

AEFIS automatically sends an email notification to the Department Academic Liaison when a Program Coordinator submits their Assessment Plan or Report for review. The sender of these email notifications is listed as "TAMIU AEFIS System," but the emails are sent automatically by the AEFIS system. **Please carefully read these emails as they include deadlines for plan/report approval.**

Logging in to AEFIS

Go to https://tamiu.aefis.net to log in to AEFIS. The website will automatically redirect you to authenticate through SSO (Single Sign On) using your NetID and password.

Accessing Assessment Plans or Reports

Assessment Plans or Reports will appear in the Action Items list on the right side of the browser after logging in. Click the blue pencil icon to review the report. 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.

Once in the plan/report, you will notice that none of the fields are editable except for your checklist section at the bottom of the report.

Approving & Rejecting Assessment Reports

All information in the plan/report is viewable by the Department Academic Liaison. Read through the plan/report, paying particular attention to each section as you go. If you feel revisions are necessary, provide specific feedback in the appropriate text box and/or at the bottom of the report, click "Reject Form" and then click "I'm Finished, Submit." This action will send the report back to the Program Coordinator. You may also want to notify the Program Coordinator via email that the form was rejected.

Conversely, if the report is in good shape and no revisions are deemed necessary, the report can be approved and submitted. We suggest you still provide feedback because any form of feedback is helpful to coordinators. To approve a report, click “Approve Form” and then click “I’m Finished, Submit.”

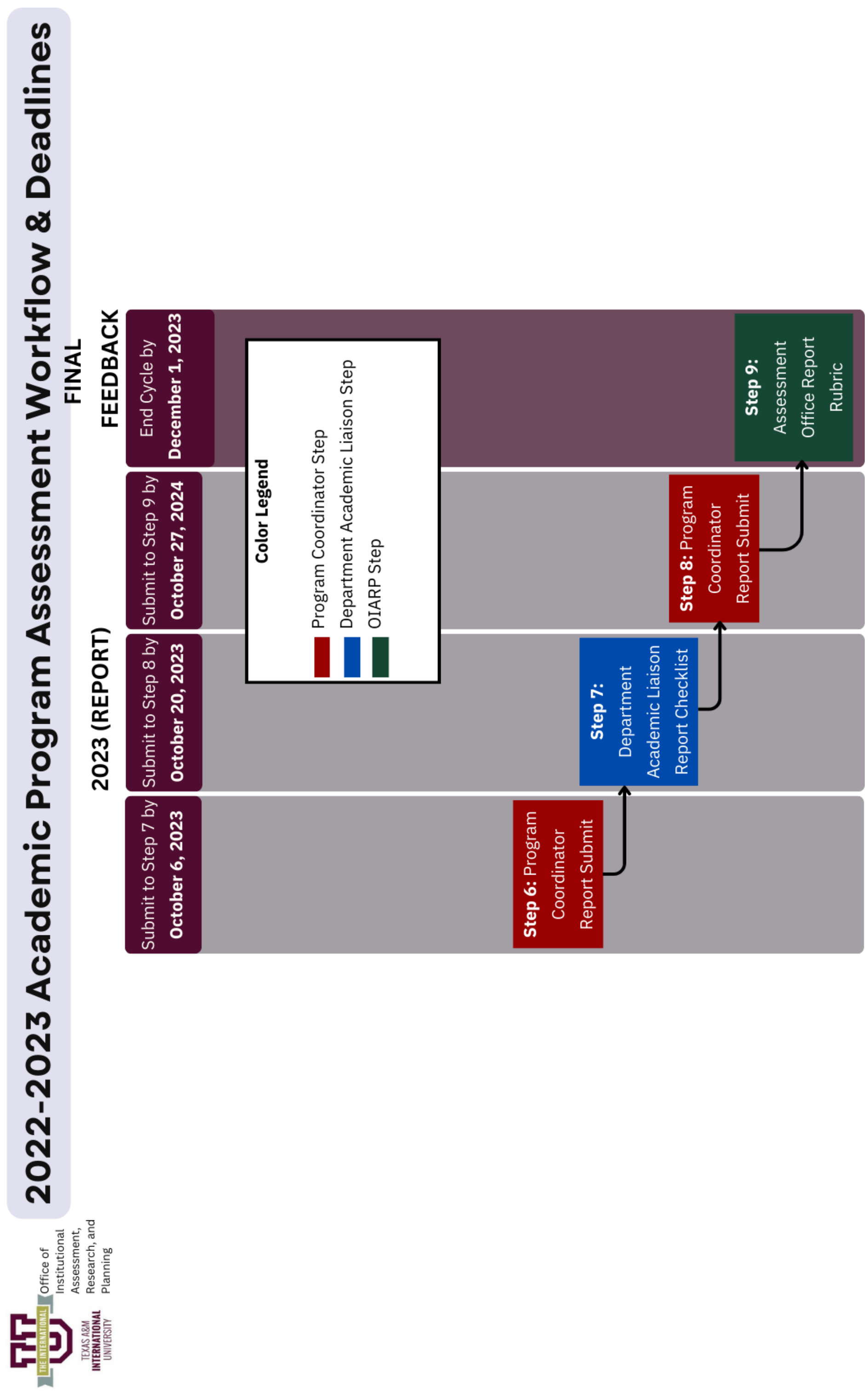
OIARP Comments

The last feedback given during each stage of the assessment cycle is provided by staff in the Office of Institutional Assessment, Research, and Planning (OIARP). In the planning and reporting stages, OIARP will 1) provide feedback on whether there is sufficient description provided 2) rate overall assessment plan and report, and 3) provide qualitative feedback if necessary.

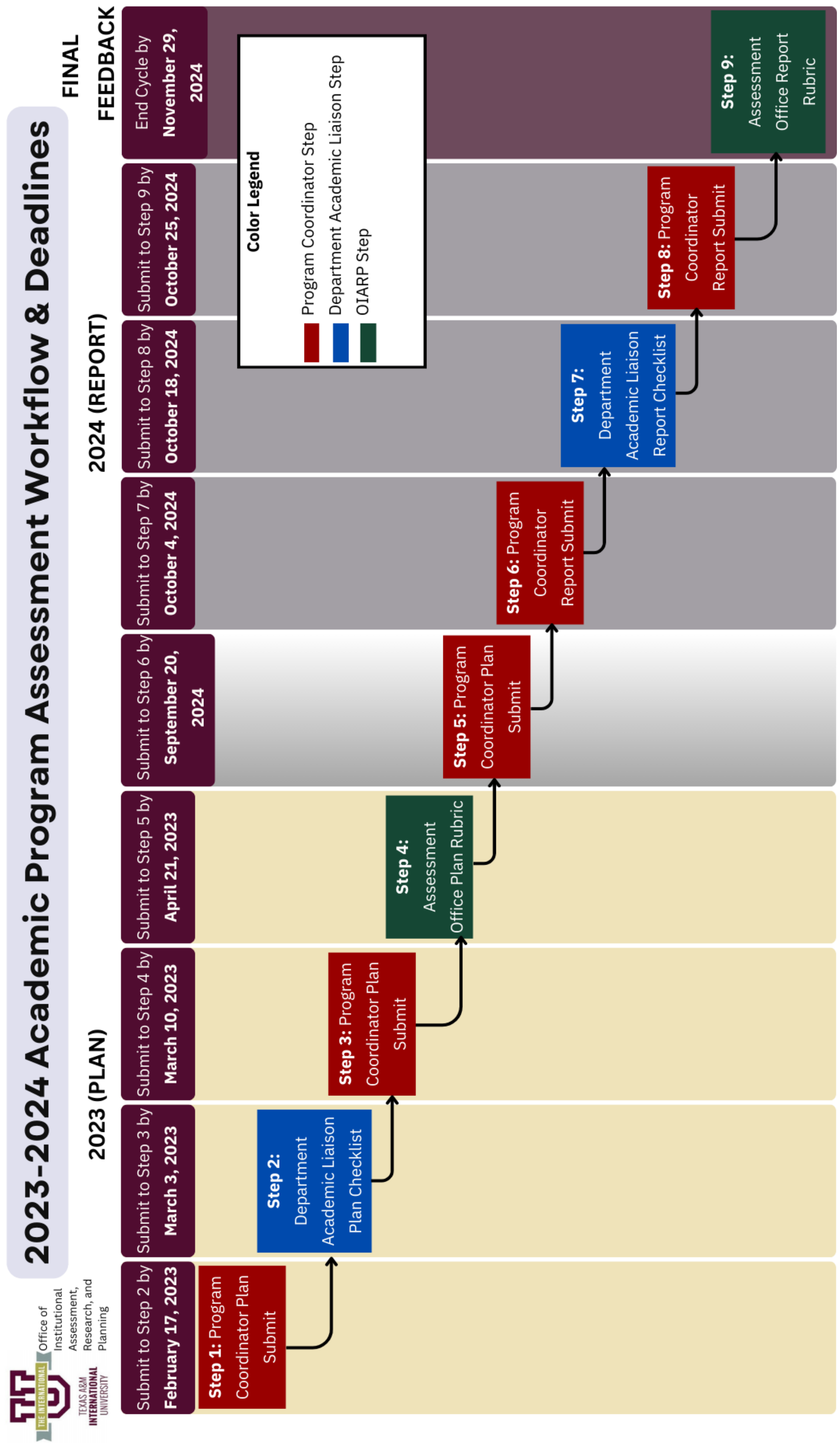
When rating the program's overall assessment plan and report (as documented in AEFIS), OIARP staff uses the Assessment Plan Rubric and the Assessment Report Rubric.

The levels of performance for both rubrics are Exemplary (3), Sufficient (2), Developing (1), Needs Attention (0). OIARP works with each academic program to ensure that they achieve a sufficient or exemplary in each assessment report element.

Appendix: 2023-24 Academic Program Assessment Workflow



Appendix: 2023-24 Academic Program Assessment Workflow



Appendix: 2024-25 Academic Program Assessment Workflow