

Assessment at the Program Level

Program Assessment is focused on the evaluation of a group of students – never individual students or instructors.

Programs are more than a set of stand-alone courses. Programs are an integrated set of learning experiences culminating in student achievement of a broad set of goals. Assessment at the program level can be accomplished in a variety of ways. At the program level, faculty collaborates, and then designs assessments to measure student achievement of critical learning outcomes. Some examples of program level assessment tools are:

- **Embedded course assignments** – a project completed at an advanced level can be used to assess skills learned through the entire program.
- **Field Experiences** – internship, practicum, service-learning, etc., evaluated through supervisors' ratings of student performance can be powerful evidence of a successful program.
- **Portfolios** – compilation of student work over time can be a clear demonstration of student learning, although they can be complicated to assess.
- **Rubrics, Checklists, Task sheets** – in advanced level courses, completed rubrics can be very useful evidence of student achievement in a program.
- **Results of external licensure** or certification exams.
- **Embedded comprehensive exam questions.**

In all of the examples above, the assessment tool is associated with a set of benchmarks, determined in advance of the assignment, that provide the mechanism through which student learning is evaluated. Data alone is just a collection of numbers or facts. Information on the other hand, organizes data so that it becomes useful for decision making purposes. To make this data useful for program assessment then, it is important that the data collected be aggregated or compiled so that the resulting information is useful for drawing conclusions about the achievement of the students as a group.