Winthrop University's Institutional Assessment Plan and Guide

The Winthrop University Institutional Assessment Plan and Guide was developed under the auspices of the University's Department of Accreditation, Accountability and Academic Services. This is a dynamic document that is frequently updated and revised to provide the most current and accurate information possible. Appreciation is extended to members of the University's 2008-2009 Academic Assessment Advisory Committee for their thoughtful review, feedback, comments and suggestions. Portions of the present document have been adapted, with permission, from the University of Virginia's Assessment Guide accessed at http://www.web.virginia.edu/iaas/assessment/assessment.shtm

Terms identified by green text can be found in the Glossary of Terms.

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Purpose of Assessment
Assessing student learning helps Winthrop University promote, maintain, and improve learning for all members of the academy. A strong teaching and learning environment along with excellent administrative and educational support services enhance the ability of Winthrop faculty, staff, and administrators to engage the University's students both inside and outside the classroom.

External Mandates
Assessment is mandated by our federal and state government systems, as well as regional and professional accrediting agencies. See Appendix A for an overview of Federal Requirements from the Commission on Colleges and Schools (COC) of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Core requirement (C.R.) 2.5 and two comprehensive standards (C.S.) from SACS address the need to assess student learning outcomes[1].

> ***C.R. 2.5:** The institution engages in **ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide** research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services that (a) results in continuing improvement and (b) demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. (**Institutional Effectiveness**)*

> ***C.S. 3.3.1:** The institution **identifies expected outcomes** for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services; **assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results.***

> ***C.S. 3.4.1:** The **institution demonstrates that each educational program** for which academic credit is awarded (a) is approved by the faculty and the administration, and (b) **establishes and evaluates program and learning outcomes**.*

History of Assessment at Winthrop University
Winthrop University's history of institutional-level assessment dates back to the mid 1980's when the University's comprehensive general education assessment program began[2]. In Winthrop's early general education assessment initiatives, data were collected on targeted student cohorts, typically first-year and senior student cohorts. Summary assessment results were conveyed to appropriate institutional units (e.g., academic and/or support services) for discussion and to inform programmatic decisions; results for individual students, faculty members, and courses were never reported. Institutional-level skills assessment initiatives included the use of rubrics, developed by Winthrop faculty members, to assess oral and written communication and assessment of critical thinking involving externally developed instruments such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). Winthrop's institutional-level indirect assessment initiatives have focused on respondent-perceptions about Winthrop's programs and learning opportunities using both nationally-developed instruments such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and internally-developed surveys for alumni and employers.

Winthrop University faculty, staff, and administrators have collaborated on institutional assessment planning and analysis in various capacities since the 1980's. From the 1990's through the early 2000's, faculty, staff, and administrators worked together through the Assessment and Institutional

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[1] Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, The *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement,* ed. College Delegate Assembly (Decatur: Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 2007), 16, 25.

[2] 2006 IE report to the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

Research Advisory Committee. The collaborative efforts of the University's Assessment and Institutional Research Advisory Committee resulted in the conceptualization and adoption of several guiding documents including a *Principles of Assessment* document (Appendix B) initially adopted in the 1990's and most recently reaffirmed by the University's Academic Leadership Council in 2003. Winthrop's *Principles of Assessment* is consistent with the *American Association of Higher Education's Nine Principles of Assessment* (Appendix C) which continues to provide a philosophical foundation for higher education assessment. In 2002, the University's faculty assessment liaisons, which included representatives from the University's Assessment and Institutional Research Advisory Committee, discussed the white paper describing a *System to Assess General Education (SAGE)* that was also adopted by the University's Academic Leadership Council. The SAGE document (Appendix D) supports *best-practices perspectives* such as faculty should be involved in the design and implementation of assessment, a multi-method approach is ideal to assess student learning, and assessment results should inform pedagogy.

Winthrop faculty and administrators value the work of assessment as evidenced by the *Policy on Faculty Credit for Assessment Activities* (Appendix E), first developed and adopted in the 1990's, and subsequently reaffirmed in 2000 by Winthrop's Academic Leadership Council (ALC) and the Assessment and Institutional Research Advisory Board.   Administration has committed resources to improving assessment practices at the University and placed emphasis on the need for a continuous and systematic ongoing assessment cycle with the restructuring of Academic Affairs in 2008 to include the Department of Accreditation, Accountability, and Academic Services.

Funding is available to assist faculty, staff, and administrators as they develop and implement useful and feasible assessment plans, analyze assessment results, and use results to improve learning. The administration supports institutional assessment in a variety of ways: intra- and inter-institutional workshops, seminars, and conferences. Academic Affairs provides educational resources related to assessment, e.g., a twenty-hour training program for faculty teaching HMXP 102, Just-in-time (JIT) online training for writing assessment, workshops for program coordinators to learn how to develop and maintain program assessment plans, and workshops/summer stipends for faculty volunteers who participated in oral communication assessment and writing assessment. Initially these resources were provided through the Office of Assessment, and the Teaching and Learning Center (TLC); however, resources have recently been provided through the Department of Accreditation, Accountability, and Academic Services, the TLC, and University College.

Winthrop has brought nationally- and internationally- recognized experts to campus to offer workshops. For example, on April 7, 2006, Dr. Dee Fink, former Director of the University of Oklahoma's Instructional Development Program and author of *Creating Significant Learning Experiences,* conducted a campus-wide Assessment Workshop. Also, Larry Kelley conducted a Faculty Development, Educational Planning, and Assessment workshop on October 28, 2005.

Beginning in the 1990's and continuing on through 2005, the University's Office of Assessment sponsored a student assessment team, Students of Winthrop Assessment Team (SWAT), which conducted campus-based assessment initiatives. SWAT presented its findings at regional conferences like the South Carolina Higher Education Assessment (SCHEA) Conference. The University has a twenty-plus year tradition of supporting faculty/staff travel to attend and present assessment initiatives at regional and national assessment conferences. In 2008, faculty and staff involved with the University's *Core Commitments* Program were awarded a national grant from the Association of American Colleges and Universities, sponsor of the national Core Commitments Program, with the support of the John Templeton Foundation to conduct a Student Excellence, Engagement, and Development (SEED) Conference on March 14, 2009[3]. Part of the day-long conference involved

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[3] Funded through an AAC & U Core Commitments extramural grant

concurrent sessions showcasing program assessment by university personnel in various academic, institutional, and support units.

Winthrop University has been nationally recognized for its interest in and commitment to assessment. In the 1980's, Winthrop was invited to pilot the College Basic Academic Subjects Examination (College BASE), a criterion-referenced achievement examination of general academic knowledge and skills, developed at the Assessment Resource Center of the University of Missouri. College BASE content is organized into four subject areas: English (including an optional writing component), mathematics, science, and social studies. Winthrop was also invited, and agreed to participate in the American College Testing's Critical Thinking Assessment Battery (CTAB) in 1997. The CTAB was a pilot project to standardize assessment of critical thinking based upon constructed responses to standardized writing prompts which were evaluated using a rubric based upon Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning[4]. Since 2001, Winthrop has been participating in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to measure students' perceptions about their educational experiences at Winthrop University. In 2005, Winthrop University was invited to participate in the longitudinal, online Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) administered through the Council for Aid to Education (CAE) with support from the Lumina Foundation. Phase one of the longitudinal CLA was administered to a cohort of first-year students during fall 2005. Phase two of the longitudinal CLA was administered during spring 2007 when members of the student cohort had either completed or were enrolled in Critical Reading, Thinking, and Writing (CRTW 201).

In 2007, Winthrop began participating in the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) College Portrait. VSA College Portrait *is a voluntary initiative for 4-year public colleges and universities developed through a partnership between the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU)[5]. VSA is designed to help institutions meet the following objectives:*

- *Demonstrate accountability and stewardship to public.*

- *Measure educational outcomes to identify effective educational practices.*

- *Assemble information that is accessible, understandable, and comparable.*

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[4] Darlene Crone-Todd et al., "Operational Definitions for Higher-Order Thinking Objectives at the Post-secondary Level," *Academic Exchange Quarterly* 4 (2000).

[5] Voluntary System of Accountability, "Welcome to VSA Online," Voluntary System of Accountability Program, http://www.voluntarysystem.org/index.cfm?page=homepage (accessed July 1, 2009).

Chapter Two: Purpose and Elements of Winthrop University's
Institutional Assessment Plan and Guide

The *Winthrop University Institutional Assessment Plan and Guide* is designed to assist faculty, staff, and administrators in developing and implementing assessment. Workshops about the design and implementation of program assessment plans are available and can be customized by request. A common assessment template was designed to allow programs to capture the following information: program contact information, mission statements, student learning outcomes and program goals, assessment strategies, and targeted levels of performance (sometimes described as criterion levels). Annual program assessment reports include the assessment plan along with actual assessment results and documentation about how results were used to improve programs and learning.

A university assessment plan template (APT) was configured in 2008 as part of the Institution's self-audit preparation for SACS reaffirmation. The purpose of the APT (Appendix G) is to standardize and centralize institutional assessment reporting. The APT is intentionally designed to provide flexibility for academic programs with specialized reporting requirements, non-accredited academic programs, and administrative and academic support units. While the template requires respondents to document how specific assessment initiatives measure performance for targeted learning outcomes or goals, space is also provided to allow for optional, more global, discussions of assessment results when multiple assessment methods are used to measure a single learning outcome or program goal.

Mandated elements of Assessment
Higher education institutions accredited by SACS must demonstrate that specific assessment initiatives are implemented to measure designated student learning outcomes (SLOs), assessment results are shared with appropriate persons, and results of specific assessment initiatives are used to improve student learning. While data from and about individuals are collected for assessment initiatives, the focus of assessment analysis and reports is always at the level of the program or a cohort, never at the level of an individual. Results from or about students, university personnel, or other individuals are confidential and never reported with identifying information.

Winthrop University program assessment plans include three or more learning outcomes and/or program goals and the assessment strategies (e.g., methods, instrumentation, rubrics, targeted performance levels, locus of responsibility, timing of the assessment, and data analysis) used to measure achievement of student learning and program goals. A multi-method assessment is considered *best practice* and often involves the use of both direct and indirect assessment methods to measure a single learning outcome or goal. Using the results from multiple methods of assessment can lead to creating one or more action plans to improve the program or learning. Actual assessment strategies are discussed in detail in Chapter Three of the present guide.

Roles and responsibilities
Conducting the assessment, evaluating and reporting assessment findings, and using the results to improve programs and learning are the responsibility of program personnel. All academic, support, and administrative units are engaged in ongoing, systematic, and integrated assessment that begins with unit personnel developing program assessment plans. For academic units, program assessment begins with faculty members in the discipline or field articulating measurable student learning outcomes and program goals, then developing and implementing

assessment initiatives to measure those learning outcomes and goals, and finally, analyzing and using assessment results to improve learning and programs. In the same way, staff and administrators in academic support and administrative units are responsible for developing program goals and learning outcomes, designing and implementing assessment strategies to measure attainment of those goals and outcomes, and documenting how assessment results are used to improve programs and learning. Merely gathering and/or reporting data is not sufficient. Nor is it sufficient to report programmatic changes as evidence of using assessment results unless those programmatic changes are linked to specific assessment initiatives.

Program coordinators or their designees are responsible for submitting assessment plans to the academic dean or institutional unit director, using the APT developed in 2008. Completed program assessment plans are electronically conveyed to academic deans or institutional administrators, as well as the Department of Accreditation, Accountability, and Academic Services (AAAS). Completed program assessment plans (program coordinator contact information, missions, student learning outcomes and program goals, assessment strategies and targeted levels of performance) are accessible on the AAAS web site (http://www.winthrop.edu/accountability/).

Annual program assessment reports (that include actual assessment results and documentation about how assessment results are being used to improve learning and programs) are prepared by program personnel, shared with appropriate internal and external stakeholders, and conveyed through the institutional unit administrator (e.g., academic deans, administrative vice presidents) to AAAS. These data are not available to groups or individuals outside of the respective program.

Reporting Assessment Results and Use of Results
Each year program personnel are provide evidence that they complete (i.e., close the loop) at least one assessment activity. For personnel to complete this task, they must complete the following process on at least one student learning outcome or program goal: assess the learning outcome or program goal, analyze and report assessment findings, and use assessment findings to improve the program and/or student learning. Programs accredited by external accrediting organizations like National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) or Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSBI) may be obligated to annually report on assessment initiatives for multiple goals and outcomes; university assessment reporting forms and processes are designed to accommodate reporting obligations for both regional (SACS) and specialized program accreditation requirements. Winthrop University requires all accredited and non-accredited academic programs, administrative units, and academic support units to assess all of their respective learning outcomes and/or program goals at least once every five years.

Chapter Three: How to Develop a Program Assessment Plan

Developing and implementing program assessment is a multi-step process. Chapter three details each step in the process. Appendices in the present document provide samples for components of the assessment plan. Contact the Office of Assessment (ext 3191) for more information.

Step 1: Begin with a brief statement of the program mission and document how the program mission supports Winthrop's Institutional Mission[6].

- Faculty and administrators in each program should meet to discuss and decide upon the program's mission and goals.

- First, include a brief statement (three-five sentences is common) describing the purpose of the program, focusing on educational values, major areas of knowledge covered in the curriculum, and careers or future studies for which graduates are prepared. Mission statements for academic support and administrative programs will focus on the broad nature of work the unit provides. A mission statement should tell the reader what the organizational unit is about, why the unit exists. Examples of mission statements are included in Appendix H.

- Second, demonstrate how the program mission supports Winthrop's institutional mission. Programs housed within academic colleges (arts and sciences, business administration, education, visual and performing arts, university college) must also align their program missions with their respective college missions. A few sentences are usually sufficient to demonstrate alignment of program, university, and college missions. Winthrop's institutional mission statement is found at: http://www2.winthrop.edu/president/mission.htm

- After developing (or revising) the program mission, and documenting alignment of the program mission with college/unit and Institutional missions, reflect on the intended learning outcomes and program goals (steps two and three in the program assessment planning process). NOTE: Steps two and three may be reversed. Some program personnel will find it easier to develop or refine assessment plans by first articulating program goals while other personnel may find it better to first articulate student learning outcomes and then reflect on program goals.

Step 2: Identify the most important student learning outcomes (SLOs) of the program.

- Regional accreditation organizations (SACS accredits Winthrop University), specialized program accreditation organizations, Federal Requirements (Appendix A), and the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) require evidence of on-going and systematic assessment of student learning and program goals that are specific, clear, and measurable.

- Student learning outcomes focus on what students will know and be able to do when they successfully complete their particular academic programs at Winthrop. SLOs can also measure the habits of mind, attitudes, and dispositions students demonstrate.

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[6] Program coordinators are reminded that the content of the Winthrop University Institutional Mission Statement is informed in part by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education.

- In academic programs, faculty members need to agree on which are the most important learning outcomes for the program. The list does not have to be exhaustive; in fact it is best to start with two or three of the most important outcomes. The list of outcomes may include those that distinguish one program's graduates from other university students.

- Drafting SLOs is a formative process and can be challenging, especially when trying to reach the level of specificity required to measure changes in learning. Personnel in Winthrop's Teaching and Learning Center, and the Department of Accreditation, Accountability and Academic Services can assist program coordinators, faculty, staff, and administrators by providing resource materials, consultancies, and workshops. Personnel in some institutional units plan retreats or workshops during which undivided attention can be focused on program assessment.

- It often takes several iterations to progress from lofty, non-measurable statements to more specific, measurable outcomes. Annual assessment may also involve revision of program goals and SLOs.

Step 3: Identify goals for the program.
- For institutional assessment purposes, goals are statements about the key work of the program now or to be accomplished in the near future. Goals are more broad and general than SLOs, and focus on activities in which program faculty, staff, and administrators engage. For example, one support service program goal might be to provide a safe and secure campus learning environment, while an academic program goal might be to provide a program curriculum with learning experiences in up-to-date research methods or laboratory skills.

- Administrative and support service programs generally exist to facilitate and support the learning environment (reflect on the University's mission and your Unit/College Mission). Academic and academic support programs generally exist to provide learning opportunities to help students develop skills such as critical thinking, communication, quantitative and scientific reasoning, global and historical perspectives, appreciation for diversity and the perspectives of others. These skills help students become contributing members of communities and prepare for further educational opportunities and careers. Academic support goals might be to provide a current technology infrastructure for learning or library resources for research and learning.

- Goals may be drawn from various areas, including learning opportunities for all members of the learning community (students, faculty, staff, and administrators), scholarship and service to our communities, the University, and our professional disciplines or fields.

- While no *upper limit* is set on the number of program goals and student learning outcomes required, university personnel are reminded that **all program goals and student learning outcomes must be assessed within a single five-year assessment cycle**. As a general guideline, aim for three to five SLOs and/or program goals which should be agreed upon by the majority of program faculty, and/or staff, and administrators. See Appendix I for examples of program goals and SLOs.

- Some accrediting organizations (like SACS) allow SLOs to be included in program goals; other specialized accreditation organizations require distinction between program goals

and student learning outcomes. The Winthrop University program assessment plan template accommodates specialized program accreditation requirements as well as SACS.

- Writing tip for Steps 2 and 3: try completing the following sentences to help identify SLOs and program goals.

  o Students who successfully complete the ____ program will know ____.

  o Students who successfully complete the ____program will be able to ____.

  o Students who successfully complete the ___ program will demonstrate ___ (dispositions, habits of mind, attitudes) for ____.

  o The ___ program will prepare students for ____.

  o The ___ program will provide ____ for the University's learning community.

- Faculty, staff, and administrators across disciplines, fields and institutions do not necessarily use the same terminology when discussing program goals and learning outcomes. For the purposes of regional accreditation requirements, a set of common terms is operationally defined, based upon the 2008 edition of the *Principles of Accreditation* adopted by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)[7]. Winthrop University's Department of Accreditation, Accountability, and Academic Services website[8] provides a glossary of terms used in SACS-required reaffirmation documentation. The glossary of terms is continuously updated as needed.

Step 4: Identify useful and feasible assessment methods (strategies/approaches).

- Assessment is not an evaluation of individual students, staff, administrators, faculty, or courses. Instead of grades for individual students or performance appraisals for individual employees, assessment methods should be selected to identify strengths and weaknesses for the entire program. Course grades, although one source of information about student achievement, are not recognized by external accrediting organizations as an adequate measure of specific student learning outcomes. Grades[9]:

  o May not be useful in identifying particular areas of strength or weakness with respect to a program's learning outcomes, e.g., the ability to construct well-supported, clearly articulated and sustained arguments;

  o Can include factors not directly related to a program's learning outcomes, such as class participation and general education outcomes, e.g., writing; and

  o Are approached differently by individual faculty members, whose grading policies

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[7] Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement,* ed. College Delegate Assembly (Decatur: Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 2007).

[8] Winthrop University, Department of Accreditation, Accountability, and Academic Services, http://www.winthrop.edu/accountability.

[9] University of Virginia Office of Institutional Assessment and Studies, *Assessment Guide: Seven Steps for Developing and Implementing a Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan*, 10. Reprinted with permission.

and practices vary.

- Important considerations when selecting assessment methods:
  - What do program personnel wish to learn from this assessment?
  - What are the benchmarks or standards (also described as levels of performance, criterion measure(s)) that the program would like to meet?
  - Which particular learning outcome or program goal is to be assessed? Keep it simple: for the program's first assessment, choose an important outcome that is practical to assess.
  - When assessing students, what important skills, knowledge, or attitudes should students possess (be able to demonstrate) at the end of a particular academic program?
  - Given resource constraints, can assessment questions be sufficiently addressed using cross-sectional assessment methods, or is a longitudinal assessment method the better choice?
    - Benefits of a cross-sectional design include the ability to sample a large cohort in a short amount of time. Disadvantages of a cross-sectional design are that the data represent a single snapshot in time and may not represent a *typical* scenario. When a cross-sectional assessment method is used periodically, program personnel can analyze multiple years of data for patterns and trends over time, taking care to document important characteristics of each cross-sectional respondent cohort.
    - Benefits of a longitudinal assessment project include the ability to track changes (value-added) of individuals or a group over time. Disadvantages of a longitudinal design include the cost of assessing and tracking a single group over time and losing members of the study group over time. Portfolio assessment is one strategy that allows program faculty to compare student work over time, e.g., looking at student papers in the first- and the fourth-year.
  - Would the outcome be best assessed by using more than one tool? For example, discipline-specific knowledge can be assessed with a comprehensive capstone examination or project that is internally-developed by university faculty members in the discipline. Results of the internally-developed assessment initiative might then be compared to student-cohort performance on an externally-developed discipline-specific licensing/credentialing examination. Adequacy of undergraduate education in a specific program might be assessed using survey results about the extent to which alumni perceive that their undergraduate education prepared them for advanced study or careers. Alumni self-perception about their undergraduate preparation can also be compared to employers' assessment of Winthrop graduates' knowledge and preparation or survey results from graduate/professional program directors about the readiness of Winthrop alumni for graduate/professional study.
  - Is the outcome being assessed tied to one particular course or to multiple courses? Remember that learning outcomes often span multiple courses, and individual course syllabi do not always align exactly with the program's learning goals.

- **Assessment methods** can be developed internally or externally (commercially available instruments, instruments developed by consortia or organizations), may be classified as *direct* methods or *indirect* methods, and may involve quantitative and/or qualitative measures. Assessment methods are described in more detail below.

- **Direct Assessment strategies measure what students know and are able to do**, and include examinations (if test items are linked to specific learning outcomes), portfolios, and performances.

  o An externally-developed and administered licensure/certification exam or other externally-developed standardized test may be used as an assessment measure of student knowledge and/or skill.

  o An internally-developed course-embedded exam in which each test item is linked to a learning outcome may provide evidence of students' understanding of fundamental concepts in a given field or discipline, and/or students' abilities to apply quantitative reasoning in a given field or discipline. Labor costs associated with internally-developed tests that are valid and reliable are high while the expense of using externally-developed tests involves the cost to purchase the test(s), scoring, and report generation.

- **Indirect Assessment strategies generally measure the respondent's perceptions, attitudes and/or disposition(s)** about an experience. Indirect methods alone are not sufficient to assess student learning and program goals, but indirect assessments can provide feedback that is useful when interpreting direct assessment results.

  o Indirect methods include student, alumni, or employer surveys, student/employee exit interviews, focus groups, curriculum and syllabus analysis, and course or program evaluations. Surveys are particularly good for revealing respondents' attitudes and opinions about what they experienced. Alumni surveys are also useful to evaluate outcomes that may only come to fruition in students' post-college careers.

  o Surveys may be developed internally. Campus resources are available to assist with survey construction.

  o Surveys may also be developed externally. For example, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is an indirect method of assessment for which Winthrop has first-year and senior-year student cohort data (since 2001). Program personnel may contact the Department of Accreditation, Accountability, and Academic Services to discuss how Winthrop's annual NSSE results may inform program assessment.

- **Qualitative and Quantitative Methods**: Quantitative assessment methods involve assigning numeric scores to demonstrated learning outcomes and/or program goals. While all learning outcomes and program goals must be measurable for regional accreditation, some skills are best evaluated using qualitative methods (e.g., portfolios of work produced, performances, and/or reflective writings). Qualitative assessment methods may involve text-descriptors to measure the quality or level of demonstrated skills. Examples of text-descriptors that could be operationally-defined by faculty, staff, and administrators include *Proficient, Developing, Beginning, Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory, Outstanding, Exceeds Expectations, Meets (or does not meet) Expectations.* Sometimes student work can be evaluated more thoroughly using both

quantitative and qualitative assessment methods. Educational programs in a variety of fields and disciplines are using portfolio assessment and rubrics that allow raters to assess the level of performance for multiple factors or categories.

- **When and where assessment is conducted**
  - o Course-embedded assessment can involve both direct and indirect assessment methods.

  - o Course-embedded assessment (via tests, portfolios, assignments) is advantageous because it is part of the curricular structure so students are usually motivated to take the assignment seriously and optimize their effort. Data *collection* takes less time for course-embedded projects (compared to other assessment initiatives) because the student work is already being submitted/completed for an assignment or course grade. Unmarked copies of student works produced electronically (text files, spreadsheets, graphics files) can be *blinded* (identifying information about the student eliminated) for the assessment project then shared with faculty/personnel conducting the assessment.

  - o Actual faculty/personnel time to conduct the assessment and analysis of assessment findings is not necessarily reduced by using course-embedded assessment approaches. During the May 2003 Winthrop general education liaisons workshop, participants discussed resources (e.g., personnel time and expertise, facilities, supplies, technology software and hardware) needed to conduct program assessment initiatives.

  - o While course-embedded assessment is encouraged where feasible, program personnel must decide which method(s) will work best in a given situation. Assignments and projects used for course-embedded assessments need to be evaluated using a rating form, described in some disciplines and fields as a scoring/evaluation sheet or a rubric. As part of planning for the assessment activity, the scoring rubric is developed and agreed upon beforehand by program faculty members, not just the instructor-of-record. The rubric is a kind of scorecard that breaks the assignment down into manageable, observable pieces, and the evaluator ranks (assesses) each portion separately. Rubrics for Winthrop's Touchstone Program, which consists of the University's general education requirements, may be a helpful model for program personnel who are developing their own learning outcome rubrics. Winthrop personnel can view faculty-developed rubrics for the University's Touchstone Program online by going to the University College web site and following URL links for programs housed in University College and then selecting the *Program Overview* link for the Touchstone Program. See Appendix J for examples of course-embedded assignments that may be used for assessment initiatives.

Step 5: Establish a level of performance for the goal or outcome being measured.

Sometimes described as a *criterion measure* or *the targeted measure,* the level of performance quantitatively defines the extent to which the SLO or program goal should be met. Even when qualitative assessment methods are used, the *level of performance* can tell the reader what percentage of students are expected to perform at a satisfactory level on a SLO measure in order for the outcome to be met. Examples of levels of performance might include:

- 80% of first-time test-takers pass the ___ licensing examination for ___ discipline.

- 75% of rising juniors satisfactorily complete interim-program portfolio requirements for____.

- 85% of employees who complete ___ training will report that they agree/strongly agree with the end-of-training self-evaluation about their ability to perform the new skill.

- 70% of alumni who respond to the alumni survey will report satisfaction with their Winthrop education as measured by their "YES" response to the question, "If I had it to do over again, I would choose Winthrop for my undergraduate degree."

- 75% of employers who respond to the employer survey will report that their Winthrop-educated employees were satisfactorily prepared for the entry-level positions in which they were hired.

- 80% of graduate program directors who respond to the graduate program director survey will report that their graduate students who earned Winthrop baccalaureate degrees were satisfactorily or well-prepared to begin graduate studies in their respective fields/disciplines.

Step 6: Communicate the assessment plan via the University's assessment plan template.
Program directors or their designees will complete the APT, including mission, measurable goals, student learning outcomes, assessment method(s), level of performance, and contact information for the Program Assessment Coordinator. Program coordinators or their designees will transmit completed plans to the unit director/college dean who will review and convey assessment plans to the AAAS department. Program personnel will receive feedback (from their deans/institutional directors, and the Department of Accreditation, Accountability, and Academic Services) about program assessment plans. The program assessment plan becomes the basis for establishing the annual program assessment initiative. The process is repeated annually.

Step 7: Develop and implement the annual program assessment initiative process.
Once the annual program assessment initiative is chosen, program personnel must detail the actual assessment implementation process. Detailing the implementation process involves answering the following basic questions: Who will be involved in each aspect of the assessment initiative? Where will it happen (in a classroom, a computer lab, online, evenings/weekends, outside of class, through campus or US postal services, etc.)? When will specific tasks be completed (establish timelines and deadlines for every task in the assessment initiative to be completed)? What materials and resources are needed (space, time, supplies, personnel) to conduct the assessment initiative? Program coordinators are responsible for providing their deans or unit directors with the implementation details of each year's assessment initiative.

Important considerations for assessment methods
- Determine who is responsible for ensuring that assessment takes place in a manner consistent with the timeline. Consider appointing an assessment coordinator, who will manage the program's assessment process. Assessment coordinator responsibilities may be assigned to one person or rotated periodically among multiple personnel within a program.

- Create a detailed timeline for the assessment cycle. When will the work be collected? When will the results be tabulated and analyzed? When will faculty meet to discuss the findings?

- If a course-embedded assessment method is selected, identify which course(s) and learning experiences (e.g., papers, exams, and presentations) are best suited to measure the intended learning outcome.

- Consider whether to assess all students or only a sample. Cost, time, money, reliability and validity are important considerations.

- Protect the confidentiality of students whose learning will be assessed.

- Decide who will collect, store, and analyze the data.

- It is good practice to inform students in writing what they are expected to do (a prompt) in their assignment and the process and criteria by which they will be assessed.

For objective test scores
Can the test results be used to improve student learning? An overall test score is usually not helpful to illuminate areas of strength and weakness. Rather, test results have to be broken down in a way that allows specific test items to be connected with specific learning outcomes.

If the test is an additional expectation for students outside of normal coursework, what steps will be taken to ensure that students take the test seriously? Incentives may be necessary, e.g., the test might substitute for some other assignment. A literature search about "low-stakes vs. high-stakes testing" can provide personnel with more information about the challenges and assessment-value of low-stakes testing.

For work that cannot be evaluated objectively: create a scoring guide (rubric)
Rubrics are an important tool for evaluating student work, especially for programs that do not use objective tests. Rubrics exist for many purposes and there are many types. Personnel who wish to examine sample rubrics are encouraged to view the Winthrop University Touchstone Program rubrics[10] available online through University College; other rubrics can be found easily through web searches. The important steps to developing a rubric are:

- Brainstorm a list of expectations for student work that demonstrate the particular learning outcome(s) being assessed. Keep the list manageable (3-8 items) and focus on the most important abilities, knowledge, or attitudes expected.

- Edit the list so that each item is specific and concrete, use action verbs when possible, and descriptive, meaningful adjectives (e.g., not "adequate" or "appropriate" but "correctly" or "carefully").

- Assign values, either numeric or descriptive, to varying levels of competence or skill. These levels could be described in detail or could simply be numeric representations of some level of an ideal.

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[10] Writing 101 Rubric http://www2.winthrop.edu/english/rubric.pdf
     CRTW 201 Rubric http://www2.winthrop.edu/english/WritingProgram/CRTWRubric.pdf

- Test the rubric by scoring a small sample of student work. Are expectations too high or too low? Are some items difficult to rate and in need of revision?

- In using rubrics, it is ideal if more than one faculty member can score the student work; if two faculty members disagree significantly, e.g., more than one point on a four point scale, a third member could score the work.

For qualitative assessments

For exit interviews, focus groups, program or course evaluations, or survey test questions, it is useful to develop a protocol/prompt/question list to ensure some consistency in the questions that students are addressing.

Step 8: Tabulate, analyze, and report assessment results.

After assessment data are collected, scored, and analyzed, the results need to be summarized, presented to program faculty, staff, and administrators, discussed in useful ways, with findings used to improve policies, procedures, teaching, and learning practices. External accreditation organizations do not consider the assessment process complete without documented evidence that results have been used to improve programs and learning.

Tabulating the Results

How results are summarized depends both on the type of results collected (qualitative vs. quantitative, cross sectional vs. longitudinal, categorical vs. scale) and on the audience. Quantitative results may best tabulate using one of the software packages supported by the University and available from the Division of Computing and Information Technology (DCIT). MS Excel is the most common and comes loaded onto all university-supported computers. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) are also available through DCIT at no charge to university program personnel.

Analyzing the results

Patterns, predictions, problems, and questions should become apparent while summarizing the data. Depending on the purpose and approach of the assessment, simple frequencies and/or means may be sufficient. It may also be possible to go beyond simply summarizing the results by analyzing the assessment data to predict or explain. To analyze the results, begin with the questions that arose from the stated learning outcomes (e.g., "To what degree have students demonstrated knowledge of the fundamental tenets of _____?"). Some analytical questions to consider:

- Have students fallen short of, met or exceeded defined standards, criteria, and/or expectations?

- Why did some students learn X but not Y?

- Do subgroups of students differ from each other in what they have learned?

- Have students' knowledge and skills increased over time?

- Is the assessment tool (rubric, test) valid and reliable? In other words, did the methods used measure what you intended to measure (validity) and are the methods likely to yield the same findings each time they are employed (reliability)?

Reporting the results

Focus on what will be useful and meaningful. It is best to keep the report as simple as possible,

with a good mix of visual representation of data and concise descriptions. Both quantitative and qualitative data can be presented graphically. Depending on the structure of the report and the type of data collected, establish clear connections among stated outcomes, standards/criteria, results, and analysis. A mechanism should be established for reviewing the results and making decisions based upon them.

Communicating the findings

Developing and implementing **a clear communication plan** is an important step. Assessment results may generate anxiety and confusion among faculty, staff, or administrators if they are unfamiliar with the assessment plan. If the results are not properly communicated, resistance can occur. Presumably program personnel have been included in the initial steps of developing a mission statement, learning goals, and measurable learning outcomes. If not, the plan will need to be communicated along with the results. Consider the following when communicating the results:

- The audience, e.g., program faculty, prospective students, deans, staff, or other administrators.

- Successes should be celebrated and publicized.

- Shortcomings should not be ignored, but neither should they be used punitively.

Step 9: Use assessment results to improve student learning.

Step nine is often the most overlooked step in the process, yet it is the reason assessments are conducted. Information gathered and analyzed is used to affirm (*prove*) or *improve* current practices[11]. Assessment results should be disseminated widely, evaluated thoroughly, and used to improve the program. As a reminder: the assessment is not about one course, one faculty member, staff person or administrator, or one student, but rather about a program and student learning as a whole.

Using assessment results -Consider action

This is the time when participants (including students) can come together and discuss the results of the assessment, review the original goals and outcomes, and make programmatic decisions based on the findings. Within the discussion:

- Return to the program mission, goals, and outcomes. How do the results line up with expectations?

- Review the performance levels set earlier in the process. Were those expectations met? Are the established standards adequate? What level of performance is good enough?

- Formulate a plan for change.

Reflect on the process

It may be helpful to review the assessment process and determine which aspects did or did not work. Faculty might consider how to make the assessment more useful the next time – are there fine points that need adjusting, or does the entire process need revamping? Does this particular assessment need to be done again, and if so, when? Reconsider goals. Evaluate the assessment

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[11] Dr. Lee Shulman, Oral Presentation (given at the Collegiate Learning Assessment Symposium, Columbus, Ohio, October 2007).

instrument, rubric, and methods. Discuss assessment of any changes to teaching practices or the curriculum.

Appendix A

Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement
Section Four: Federal Requirements[12]

The U.S. Secretary of Education recognizes accreditation by the Commission on Colleges in establishing the eligibility of higher education institutions to participate in programs authorized under Title IV of the *1998 Higher Education Amendments* and other federal programs. Through its periodic review of institutions of higher education, the Commission assures the public that it is a reliable authority on the quality of education provided by its member institutions.

The federal statute includes mandates that the Commission review an institution in accordance with criteria outlined in the regulations of the *Amendments* developed by the U.S. Department of Education. As part of the review process, institutions are required to document compliance with those criteria and the Commission is obligated to consider such compliance when the institution is reviewed for initial membership or continued accreditation.

Implicit in every Federal Requirement mandating a policy or procedure is the expectation that the policy or procedure is in writing and has been approved through appropriate institutional processes, published in appropriate institutional documents accessible to those affected by the policy or procedure, and implemented and enforced by the institution.

4.1 The institution evaluates success with respect to student achievement including, as appropriate, consideration of course completion, state licensing examinations, and job placement rates. (Student achievement)

4.2 The institution's curriculum is directly related and appropriate to the purpose and goals of the institution and the diplomas, certificates, or degrees awarded. (Program curriculum appropriate for intended purpose)

4.3 The institution makes available to students and the public current academic calendars, grading policies, and refund policies. (Publication of policies)

4.4 Program length is appropriate for each of the institution's educational programs. (Program length)

4.5 The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints. *(See Commission policy "Complaint Procedures against the Commission or its Accredited Institutions.")* (Student complaints)

4.6 Recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution's practices and policies. (Recruitment materials)

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[12] Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, The *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement,* ed. College Delegate Assembly (Decatur: Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 2007), 33-36.

4.7 The institution is in compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the *1998 Higher Education Amendments.* (In reviewing the institution's compliance with these program responsibilities, the Commission relies on documentation forwarded to it by the U.S. Department of Education.) (Title IV program responsibilities)

Appendix B

Winthrop University's Principles of Assessment

The Office of Assessment facilitates institution-wide development and implementation of high quality methods to assess student learning and development, and encourages the use of results for program planning and improvement. In order to accomplish this mission Office of Assessment personnel work collaboratively with faculty, staff, and administrators to:

1. Establish and implement comprehensive assessment policies and plans conducive to institutional effectiveness;

2. Plan, implement, conduct surveys of students, alumni, and faculty;

3. Support and/or conduct special research projects related to assessment and to student learning and development;

4. Assist in the planning and /or implementation of assessment activities by providing technical assistance, consultation and support services to university units;

5. Prepare and disseminate internal and external reports of assessment findings;

6. Collaborate with other universities, organizations, agencies, and individuals for the purpose of stimulating innovative assessment policies and practices;

7. Foster scholarship of assessment through presentations and publications.

Appendix C

**Nine Principles of Assessment of the
American Association of Higher Education Assessment Forum**

1. **The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.** Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve. Educational values should drive not only **what** we choose to assess but also **how** we do so. Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what's easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about.

2. **Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.** Learning is a complex process. It entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but values, attitudes, and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom. Assessment should reflect these understandings by employing a diverse array of methods, including those that call for actual performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration. Such an approach aims for a more complete and accurate picture of learning, and therefore firmer bases for improving our students' educational experience.

3. **Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.** Assessment is a goal-oriented process. It entails comparing educational performance with educational purposes and expectations--these derived from the institution's mission, from faculty intentions in program and course design, and from knowledge of students' own goals. Where program purposes lack specificity or agreement, assessment as a process pushes a campus toward clarity about where to aim and what standards to apply; assessment also prompts attention to where and how program goals will be taught and learned. Clear, shared, implementable goals are the cornerstone for assessment that is focused and useful.

4. **Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.** Information about outcomes is of high importance; where students "end up" matters greatly. But to improve outcomes, we need to know about student experience along the way--about the curricula, teaching, and kind of student effort that lead to particular outcomes. Assessment can help us understand which students learn best under what conditions; with such knowledge comes the capacity to improve the whole of their learning.

5. **Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.** Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative. Though isolated, "one-shot" assessment can be better than none, improvement over time is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of cohorts of students; it may mean collecting the same examples of student performance or using the same instrument semester after semester. The point is to monitor progress toward intended goals in a spirit of continuous improvement. Along the way, the assessment process itself should be evaluated and refined in light of emerging insights.

6. **Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.** Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility. Thus, while assessment efforts may start small, the aim over time is to involve people from across the educational community. Faculty play an especially important role, but assessment's questions can't be fully addressed without participation by student-affairs educators, librarians, administrators, and students. Assessment

may also involve individuals from beyond the campus (alumni/ae, trustees, employers) whose experience can enrich the sense of appropriate aims and standards for learning. Thus understood, assessment is not a task for small groups of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better-informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.

7. **Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.** Assessment recognizes the value of information in the process of improvement. But to be useful, information must be connected to issues or questions that people really care about. This implies assessment approaches that produce evidence that relevant parties will find credible, suggestive, and applicable to decisions that need to be made. It means thinking in advance about how the information will be used, and by whom. The point of assessment is not to gather data and return "results"; it is a process that starts with the questions of decision-makers, that involves them in the gathering and interpreting of data, and that informs and helps guide continuous improvement.

8. **Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.** Assessment alone changes little. Its greatest contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and worked at. On such campuses, the push to improve educational performance is a visible and primary goal of leadership; improving the quality of undergraduate education is central to the institution's planning, budgeting, and personnel decisions. On such campuses, information about learning outcomes is seen as an integral part of decision making, and avidly sought.

9. **Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.** There is a compelling public stake in education. As educators, we have a responsibility to the publics that support or depend on us to provide information about the ways in which our students meet goals and expectations. But that responsibility goes beyond the reporting of such information; our deeper obligation--to ourselves, our students, and society--is to improve. Those to whom educators are accountable have a corresponding obligation to support such attempts at improvement.

Appendix D

System for Assessing General Education: A Working Paper
System for Assessing General Education (SAGE) at
Winthrop University: A Working Plan developed by
Dr. Joseph Prus, Director, Office of Assessment
May 2002

This current version was drafted after an initial meeting (May 11, 2002) of faculty assessment liaisons from various general education competency committees and input from the Academic Leadership Council.

Since 1988, Winthrop University has systematically assessed knowledge and abilities related to its general education program. General Education assessment methods have included national standardized examinations, oral and written communication rubrics developed at Winthrop and applied to essays and to videotaped speeches, learning or classroom research/assessment methods, and portions of student, faculty, and alumni surveys addressing various aspects of general education. In some respects, Winthrop has been a pioneer of general education assessment. For example, it was a pilot institution for the Educational Testing Service (ETS) *Academic Profile* examination, one of the first institutions in the Southeast to use the *College BASE* examination developed by the University of Missouri, and a participant in an American College Testing (ACT) pilot of a critical thinking assessment battery. Many Winthrop faculty have been active participants in, and contributors to, state and national conferences and activities related to general education assessment and have contributed to scholarship in the field. For example, Winthrop faculty have conducted workshops and/or presented papers at almost every American Association on Higher Education (AAHE) annual assessment conference over the past twelve years.

Historically, Winthrop's has focused on *program* level assessment of general education. Rather than providing information about the performance of specific students, results have shed light on the effectiveness of the general education program across students. Another consistent characteristic of Winthrop's approach to general education assessment has been its inclusion of multiple methods. Such methods have included national examinations, local and national surveys, and methods developed by Winthrop faculty specifically for assessing aspects of general education. Although specific methods and instruments have changed over time, Winthrop's assessment of general education has always included both strong "internal" faculty involvement as well as externally validated measures such as national examinations or surveys. Principles for assessment at Winthrop, as well as results of some previous general education assessment, may be found at the Office of Assessment web site at: http://www.winthrop.edu/acad_aff/Assessment

Future general education assessment must be consistent with Winthrop's established principles. In particular, general education assessment must be institutionally supported but faculty-driven, and must include multiple methods that are as valid and reliable as possible. It must protect the rights of students and include training and support for faculty. And, of course, it should yield information useful for examining and improving general education on a continuing basis.

The advent of a new general education program at Winthrop provides an opportunity for the University and its faculty to extend its ongoing commitment to assessment while refining its methods. The structure of faculty committees that has been established to plan the implementation of the new general education program provides for a base of faculty input and "ownership." Additionally, there is an important opportunity within the new program to more strongly imbed assessment into the structure of general education in a way that will make it more meaningful to faculty and students and useful for

program improvement purposes. This paper outlines a proposal for assessment of the revised general education program.

Assessment Planning Structure

It is critical that general education *assessment* be designed and implemented by those most involved in planning and implementing the general education *program and associated courses*. Faculty planning the implementation of the new general education program at Winthrop are organized into committees focusing on specific competency areas. In order to make use of existing faculty assessment expertise and provide a consistent but efficient structure for developing and sharing assessment ideas, each committee will assign one member to be its "assessment liaison." This faculty member will be responsible for meeting occasionally with other liaisons and with Office of Assessment faculty, who will serve as technical "consultants" to the process. The group will develop, with feedback from other faculty, a consensus around a plan for assessing the new general education program, and will generate a structure and processes for such assessment. The structure will include some common processes by which all general education competencies will be assessed as well as some processes unique to specific competencies. In order to assure that this is a continuing process, it is proposed that these liaisons, as well as other key faculty, senior staff and administrators, and offices of Assessment and Institutional Research personnel, constitute a revised *Assessment and Research Advisory Board*.

Development of an Assessment System

The primary focus of any student assessment should be on gathering *evidence* of the attainment of competencies or abilities. In the case of general education, assessment should help to answer questions such as: *"How will we know that students have attained general education competencies?"* and *"What evidence will we have to document that students have attained such competencies?"* The methods used to do this at Winthrop should continue to include both internally-developed and nationally validated measures appropriate for Winthrop's general education program, its diverse students, and its resources and needs.

General education assessment methods should be varied in their approach, but should be conceived as part of a *system* rather than as isolated measures or events. As much as possible, methods to assess specific competencies should be implemented by faculty within the ongoing course and program structure. *Course-imbedded assessment of general education* will facilitate the use of results for improving instruction. Those methods which must be accomplished outside general education courses structures, such as the testing of seniors, will continue to be coordinated by the Office of Assessment but must have the support of faculty and academic departments (especially given that Winthrop has no institutional assessment requirement for students).

The general education assessment system must be sensitive to the time and resources of the faculty. Thus, including assessment methods that can be implemented by various "stakeholders" (e.g., faculty instructors, Office of Assessment faculty, and Office of Institutional Research staff) will likely be more effective than relying too heavily on one assessment method or source. The system should be as cost-effective as possible, and include a balance between external measures (which tend to be more costly in terms of institutional expenditures) and internal measures (which tend to be more costly in terms of faculty and staff time and resources).

Assessment Methods: A Proposal

While there is a need to consider new and unique methods to assess some aspects of the new general education program, it would also be beneficial to maintain some continuity with previous methods. Continuity will facilitate the examination of competencies unique to the new program while also providing trend data over time. Such trends, versus "single point" data, are often among the most valid and useful assessment findings.

The following matrix outlines proposed methods for inclusion in Winthrop's general education assessment system:

	Local	National
Surveys	*Winthrop Senior Survey* *Winthrop Alumni Surveys*	*National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)*
Examinations/Rubrics	*Rubric for each area of general education*	*College BASE*

As can be seen, the methods include national instruments such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which Winthrop has administered to first-year students and seniors for the past two years, and the College BASE, which has been administered periodically over the past ten years to samples of first-year students and seniors at Winthrop. The NSSE is a national survey which focuses primarily on student engagement but which includes items pertaining specifically to critical thinking, problem-solving, and other aspects of general education. The College BASE is a standardized, national examination of general education developed at the University of Missouri and used by Winthrop since 1990. It includes content in science, social studies, English, writing, and math as well as competency measures within these areas. Such national instruments provide external data by which to compare the responses and performances of Winthrop students.

The proposed methods also include internally-developed student and alumni surveys (each of which has sections pertaining to general education) and rubrics which would be created to assess each of the major areas of the general education program. These ongoing assessment methods could be supplemented by periodic "special" surveys or other methods by which the program might be evaluated.

The component of the above system that would have to be developed specifically for the new general education program consists of rubrics for each of the 12 competency areas. As used here, a *rubric* is a *set of expectations or criteria for levels of performance* based on the competencies established for each general education area. Rubrics would be developed using a common framework or format, but might be applied to different types of student performance or work. For example, the rubric for oral communication might be applied to a student speech or theatre performance while the rubric for written communication might be applied to an end-of-semester essay (See attached example of writing rubric that has been previously created and used at Winthrop for this purpose). Course-embedded activities for which a rubric might be applied would include research papers, performance of skills as part of a simulation, essay, examination, debate, classroom research activity, projects, a written response to a film or presentation, or similar activity which allows students to demonstrate the desired competencies.

While a competency committee might decide that one activity would work for all courses within a given area, a choice of several activities to which the same rubric could be applied would allow for greater flexibility within courses and would likely be more feasible. The Office of Assessment can provide additional examples of activities that competency committees may wish to consider when developing assessment plans for each area.

Although rubrics may define varying performance levels, it is proposed that the rubrics established for each area of general education at Winthrop include five levels corresponding roughly to the five points in Winthrop's grading system (5, 4, 3, 2, 1; or "Excellent," "Good," "Satisfactory" "Fair" "Poor "). This will require "up-front" work, but will provide advantages later on. Specifically, a five point system will facilitate the use of the assessment for grading purposes in a course (if that is desired by the faculty member teaching the course) and would likely help faculty both conceptualize the meaning of each level and interpret results relative to the grading "benchmarks" that they use. Additionally, operationalizing the five levels up front will enable faculty to more explicitly communicate performance standards to students. Finally, a common number of defined performance levels for each general education competency area will also facilitate summarizing and generalizing results. The attached example from the California educational system shows how a five point rubric might be summarized *across* various curriculum areas. Under the proposed assessment system, Winthrop's general education competencies could be summarized and communicated in the same manner. This would help to make students, faculty, and other stakeholders more aware of the expectations.

Implementation of Methods and Use of Results[13]
It is critical that any system of assessment include mechanisms for gathering, interpreting, reporting, and using results. In the case of the course-embedded aspects of general education assessment (i.e., the use of common rubrics) **the process should be incorporated into the institutional structure for approving and coordinating course offerings. In other words, once rubrics and associated assessment activities have been decided upon by competency committees, it should be an expectation that the rubric and assessment activity will be used in all courses within a given area (and be reflected in course syllabi so that students are aware of expectations). In fact, a commitment to do so should be part of the process for approving courses within that area**. Without such a commitment, the system for general education assessment will disintegrate quickly. Once approved, it is critical that training in the application of assessment rubrics be provided to the faculty who will be involved in their implementation. Such training is needed to assure an informed, consistent application of the assessment. The training would likely be best accomplished by the yet-to-be-named Coordinator of General Education working collaboratively with the Office of Assessment and the Teaching and Learning Center (ALC).

Later in the planning and implementation process, **a schedule for gathering and interpreting results and for reporting findings should be established**. Consistent with other assessment reporting at Winthrop, **findings should be reported in some summary fashion** (e.g., the percent of students scoring at each level defined by the rubrics) **at the general education program and competency level, and not at an individual student, faculty, or course section level**. **It is proposed that the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Coordinator of General Education, and the Office of Assessment, with input from faculty, establish a system for reporting and summarizing data on a periodic basis that assures reporting consistent with Commission on Higher Education (CHE) Institutional Effectiveness guidelines**. The schedule should be sensitive to: a) the time

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[13] Bolded text indicates assessment practices identified by Dr. Joseph Prus in the *System for Assessing General Education: A Working Paper System for Assessing General Education (SAGE)* document that are currently in use at Winthrop University.

demands on faculty; b) the need for information on which to base program decisions; and c) to the "costs" versus perceived potential benefits involved. **Such a schedule would likely involve *periodic* (e.g., every three years) reporting for each competency area.**

Regardless of reporting schedule, it is critical that the process include interpretation of results, discussion of possible implications, and consideration of potential program and/or instructional improvements by those faculty most responsible for the respective areas. A venue whereby interpretation and use of assessment findings might be done with institutional support for faculty participation should be seriously considered. Such a process would facilitate more ongoing examination of general education and use of assessment results for meaningful dialogue and change. It would also likely encourage greater faculty familiarity with general education competencies and associated assessment methods and greater consistency over time in the manner in which the competencies are addressed in courses and related instruction.

Appendix E

Policy on Faculty Credit for Assessment Activities

TO BE INSERTED

Appendix F

2009-2010 Program Assessment Timeline

TO BE ANNOUNCED

Appendix G

Assessment Plan Template Form

<table>
<tr>
<td colspan="2" rowspan="2">Winthrop University
Assessment Plan Template (APT)
Please email completed form to the Department of Accountability, Accreditation and Academic Services (AAAS). Thank you.</td>
<td>Date form completed:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewed by _____ Date_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">Program (Undergraduate degree, Graduate degree, Certificate, Academic Support, Administrative, Other):</td>
<td>CIP Code:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">Contact information for Program Coordinator (person responsible for completing APT and annual updates)
Email:
Phone:
Office address:</td>
<td>Administrative Unit director (deans, vice presidents, etc.) receiving APT and annual updates:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="3">Year of assessment review/report: _____(Month) ____(Year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="3">Program Mission Statement:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="3">Unit or College Mission:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="3">Winthrop University Institutional Mission:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">Student learning outcome (SLO) or Program Goal #1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment Method #1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of Performance Expected (may also be described as <i>performance indicator, success criterion)</i></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment Results <i>require specificity for a given assessment reporting period. If the first goal or SLO was not measured in the current reporting period, leave the cell to the right blank or type the phrase, "not</i></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</table>

assessed in __ (insert year).	
Use of Results to improve learning and/or programs	
Additional comments or discussion. *Optional: program coordinators may leave this category blank. The APT is designed to accommodate the milieu of educational, administrative and academic support units on a university campus, as well as the varied reporting requirements of specialized program accreditation organizations.*	
Assessment Method #2	
Level of Performance Expected	
Assessment Results	
Use of Results to improve learning and/or programs	
Additional comments or discussion	

NOTE: A minimum of one assessment method is required for each goal or student learning outcome. Ideally, multiple assessment methods are used. Consider your division time and resource capabilities.

SLO or Program Goal #2	
Assessment Method #1	
Level of Performance Expected	
Assessment Results	
Use of Results to improve learning and/or programs	
Additional comments or discussion	

	Assessment Method #2	
	Level of Performance Expected	
	Assessment Results	
	Use of Results to improve learning and/or programs	
	Additional comments or discussion	
SLO or Program Goal #3		
	Assessment Method #1	
	Level of Performance Expected	
	Assessment Results	
	Use of Results to improve learning and/or programs	
	Additional comments or discussion	
	Assessment Method #2	
	Level of Performance Expected	
	Assessment Results	
	Use of Results to improve learning and/or programs	
	Additional comments or discussion	
Programs may add additional program goals and/or student learning outcomes below.		
SLO or Program Goal #4		
	Assessment Method #1	
	Level of Performance Expected	
	Assessment Results	
	Use of Results to improve learning and/or programs	

Additional comments or discussion		
	Assessment Method #2	
	Level of Performance Expected	
	Assessment Results	
	Use of Results to improve learning and/or programs	
	Additional comments or discussion	
SLO or Program Goal #5		
	Assessment Method #1	
	Level of Performance Expected	
	Assessment Results	
	Use of Results to improve learning and/or programs	
	Additional comments or discussion	
	Assessment Method #2	
	Level of Performance Expected	
	Assessment Results	
	Use of Results to improve learning and/or programs	
	Additional comments or discussion	

Examples of selected Winthrop University program mission statements.

B. A. Mass Communications Program Mission
By the time of graduation, mass communication graduates are expected to be able to gather, organize and process information; conduct interviews; write in professional style to a professional level of competence; and edit and produce, either in printed or broadcast form; all while meeting standards of professional ethics.

B. A. Psychology
The mission of the Winthrop Department of Psychology is to provide high quality, comprehensive preparation for all students, whether their goals are to attend graduate school and become psychologists, enter graduate or professional school in business, law, medicine, or another field, attain a job in human services or another field at the bachelor's degree level, or study psychology as part of a liberal arts education.

B.A. Environmental Studies
The Environmental Sciences and Studies Program is an interdisciplinary program that focuses on the state of the environment and serious environmental problems that the world faces. Through a series of academic courses and co-curricular activities, students will learn how human activity impacts the environment and will obtain the critical thinking and problem-solving skills necessary to productively contribute to solutions.
*The **BA degree in Environmental Studies will provide students with a broad introduction to the scientific, social, political, cultural, economic, and policy aspects of environmental issues**. BA students will minor in a discipline that compliments their major and will be prepared to pursue careers with environmental groups, policy groups, and consulting firms and to continue studies in graduate programs in environmental studies and law. The environmental studies degree program is a challenging undergraduate program that helps students develop the knowledge, skills, and values which will enrich their lives. In addition, graduates will be prepared to take on the significant environmental challenges of contemporary society.*

B.A. English
The Department of English offers preparation for graduate study and professional employment.

B.S. Early Childhood Education
The Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Early Childhood Education (ECED) program is designed to prepare individuals who are seeking initial certification in grades Pre-K-3. This program is developed specifically to address all National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation standards for initial certification programs. The B.S. in ECED program enables Winthrop students to acquire and develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will prepare them to meet the diverse needs and challenges within our global society. Winthrop graduates are well prepared to assume teaching careers, as well as enroll in highly competitive graduate schools or professional schools.

B.A. Dance
The mission of the dance program is to foster individual students' aesthetic, intellectual, and creative development within the context of a liberal arts education as they pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Examples of student learning outcomes for a sample of academic programs

B.A. English
English majors are able to read and interpret a wide range of literary texts of average difficulty with comprehension of their content and relevant literary characteristics.

B.S. Business Administration
Students will be able to demonstrate the use of an ethical framework in recognizing and explaining the consequences of business administration. (Ethics)

Master of Social Work
(Students will be able to) Apply critical thinking skills within the context of professional social work practice.

B.A. Environmental Studies
Students will demonstrate familiarity and competence with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, and historical trends in a <u>variety of subject areas related to the environment</u>.

M.S. Psychology/Specialist in School Psychology
Students will demonstrate the knowledge and ability needed to conduct and report results of valid problem analyses including psychoeducational assessments using a data-based decision-making process.

B.A. Sociology
1.   Students will develop the analytical tools to understand an ever-expanding body of knowledge about the dynamics of social relationships, the nature of power and influence in complex societies, and the roles of age, class, ethnicity, gender, religion, and other social phenomena that affect viewpoints and life chances.

2.   Students will gain access to concrete skills that are relevant to a broad range of rewarding careers. These skills enhance the student's ability to assess new and unfamiliar situations, to select and apply qualitative and /or quantitative techniques in solving practical problems in creative ways, and to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.

B.S. Elementary Education
Elementary Education teacher candidates will demonstrate mastery of content knowledge in their profession by achieving acceptable pass rates on Praxis II Elementary, Content Area Exercises and Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) assessments.

B.F.A. Visual Communication Design
Students will develop the ability to describe and respond to the audiences and contexts which communication solutions must address, including recognition of the physical, cognitive, cultural, and social human factors that shape design decisions.

Examples of program goals from academic, academic support and administrative programs

WILL BE UPDATED DURING THE 2009-10 ACADEMIC YEAR

Appendix J
Examples of Course-Embedded Assessment opportunities

Papers written for course assignments can
- Demonstrate knowledge of important content,
- Show critical thinking,
- Display writing skills, and
- May reflect on what, how, and why students learned.

Independent research projects can demonstrate
- understanding of
  - fundamental concepts from among the three main areas of natural science, including earth, life, and physical sciences,
  - the role of data analysis in sociology (or other social sciences)
  - the importance of human diversity (both past and present) as well as the diversity of ideas, institutions, philosophies, moral codes, and ethical principles
- ability to
  - use critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a variety of research methods
  - discuss strengths and limitations of science,
  - use critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a variety of research methods

Portfolios of student work are assessed systematically, using a rubric,
- May be evaluated to determine student learning over time, or may be comprised of the student's best work,
- Encourage student self-reflection, and are thought to incorporate learning into the process of assessment.

Videotapes of oral presentations or performances can demonstrate
- Ability to communicate clearly and effectively in standard English,
- Ability to examine values, attitudes, beliefs, and habits which define the nature and quality of life
- openness to new ideas, new ways of working and new ways of moving and respond to these opportunities in accordance with this value

Senior thesis or "capstone" course experiences can demonstrate
- Ability to understand and apply psychological principles to personal, social, and organizational issues,
- familiarity and competence with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, and historical trends in a variety of subject areas related to the environment

Field or service learning work can demonstrate
- Ability to practice in one's discipline or field of study without discrimination and with respect, knowledge, and skills related to client's age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation,
- Ability to properly design, conduct, evaluate, and report a scientific experiment in one's discipline or field of study

Glossary of Terms

The Glossary of Terms contains a number of definitions adapted from assessment resources developed by other institutions and entities. The major resources listed below were used to compile the present glossary. The resources listed below are neither comprehensive nor exhaustive.

Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. 2007. *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement.* Ed. College Delegate Assembly. Decatur: Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Eaton, Judith S. 2009. *An Overview of U.S. Accreditation*. Washington DC: Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

Office of Institutional Assessment and Compliance. Assessment Glossary. University of South Carolina, http://www.ipr.sc.edu/effectiveness/toolbox/glossary.htm

Office of Accountability, Accreditation, Planning and Assessment. Glossary of Assessment Terms and Links to More Information. College of Charleston, http://www.cofc.edu/studentaffairs/pdf/Glossary_of_Assessment_Terms.pdf

Accreditation – A certification awarded by an external, recognized organization, that the institution or program meets certain requirements overall, or in a particular discipline. The SACS accreditation process assumes that all programs and services wherever offered within the context of the institution's activity are reviewed as part of the institutional effectiveness process.

Aggregated Data – Statistics which relate to broad classes, groups, or categories, so that it is not possible to distinguish the properties of individuals within those classes, groups, or categories. Aggregated data should be collected for program or unit level assessment.

Assessment – The ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning and institutional effectiveness; the systematic collection, review and use of information about educational programs and administrative units undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning, development, and institutional effectiveness. While SACS does not imply that all elements of the system must be undertaken simultaneously or even annually, the various activities of the institution's planning and evaluation system are scheduled at periodic intervals that make sense for the institution and its mission. The results of diverse assessment efforts can be integrated to provide a sound basis for plans aimed at institutional improvement.

Assessment Plan Template – The document that demonstrates how the academic program or administrative unit will assess the upcoming year's performance. This document includes: program contact information, mission statements, student learning outcomes and program goals, assessment strategies, targeted levels of performance, assessment results, and documentation about how results were used to improve programs and learning.

Assessment Report – The document that presents data and discusses how assessment results will be used to change curriculum and/or assessment procedures for the coming year. That is, the two key components of this report include the Results and Use of Results.

Backload (ed, ing) – Amount of effort after the data collection.

Benchmark – A criterion-referenced objective. Performance data (from a department/college's own past reviews, other department/college, or institution) can be utilized to create a baseline of acceptable performance or to create a standard to strive for when setting target levels of performance.

Best Practice – Compares your results against the best of your peers.

Bloom's Taxonomy – Six levels in which cognitively related objects can be categorized by levels of increasing complexity; the revised levels are Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, and Create.

Closing the Loop – Using assessment results for academic program/administrative unit change and improvement.

Coherence – A critical component of a program which should demonstrate an appropriate sequencing of courses, not a mere bundling of credits, so that the student learning is progressively more advanced in terms of assignments and scholarship required and demonstrates progressive advancement in a field of study that allows students to integrate knowledge and grow in critical skills.

Cohort – A group whose progress is followed by means of measurements at different points in time. A group of persons sharing a particular statistical or demographic characteristic.

Competency – Level at which performance is acceptable.

Course Assessment – Using direct and indirect measures to determine if the student outcomes at the course level have been met and using this data to enhance student learning.

Course Embedded Assessment – Assessment methods designed to be a part of the curricular structure and take place in the normal operation of the class e.g., tests, portfolios, papers, etc.

Criteria – Describes relevant measures that will be used; states precisely what student or support unit will be doing; explains the conditions under which student learning outcomes and program goals should be accomplished; states an acceptable level of aggregate performance.

Criterion-referenced – A test or other type of assessment designed to provide a measure of performance that is interpretable in terms of a clearly defined and delimited domain of learning tasks. Criterion-referenced assessments report how well academic programs and administrative support units are doing relative to a pre-determined performance level on a specified set of program goals or student learning outcomes. Criterion-referenced assessments determine what test takers can do and what they know, not how they compare to others.

Curriculum Mapping – Curriculum maps demonstrate where in the program's curriculum learning outcomes are being addressed. In essence, a curriculum map consists of a table with two axes, one pertaining to program learning outcomes, the other to courses in the major. Mapping program outcomes to course outcomes shows how students develop skills and knowledge in courses that are required for their programs of study.

Direct Assessment Measures – Examination or observation of student knowledge or skills against measurable student learning outcomes. Require students to display their knowledge and skills as they respond to the instrument itself.

Effectiveness – How well an approach, a process, or a measure addresses its intended purpose. Extent to which an institution/division/department meets its unique mission.

Externally-developed Assessment – Commercially available assessment instruments; instruments developed by consortia or organization. Compare to internally-developed assessment.

Focus Group – A carefully planned discussion to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment. It is conducted with approximately 7-12 people by a skilled interviewer.

Formative Assessment – Intended to assess ongoing program/project activity and provide information to improve the project. Assessment feedback is short term in duration. Compare with summative assessment.

Frontload (ed, ing) – Amount of effort required in the early stage of assessment method development of data collection.

General Education – A collegiate level general education program should 1) be a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, 2) ensure breadth of knowledge, and 3) be based on a coherent rationale. It is essential to understand the general education component of the degree program within the context of the institution's mission and within the expectations of a college-level institution. Through general education, students encounter the basic content and methodology of the principal areas of knowledge: humanities and fine arts, social and behavioral sciences, and natural sciences and mathematics. See also Touchstone Program.

Goal - Desired outcomes that define how the institution/division/department expects to fulfill its mission.

High-stakes Testing - A test which has important consequences for the test taker. A high-stakes test can have a major impact a student's academic career. The outcome of the test can mean the difference of receiving or not receiving a passing grade, a scholarship, a degree, an internship, etc. Compare to low-stakes testing.

Indirect Assessment Measures – Assessment methods that involve perceptions of learning rather than actual demonstrations of learning outcome achievement. For example, a student survey about whether a course helped develop a greater sensitivity to diversity or an employer survey asking for feedback on graduate's skills. Compare with direct measures.

Institutional Assessment – Assessment of the institutional mission and goal statements including student services, financial stability, business and industry training, as well as academic programs.

Institutional Effectiveness – The systematic, explicit, and documented process of measuring performance against mission in all aspects of an institution. It includes all programs, services, and constituencies and is strongly linked to the decision making process at all levels, including the institution's budgeting process. According to SACS,

> **3.3.1** The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas: (Institutional Effectiveness)

3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes
3.3.1.2 administrative support services
3.3.1.3 educational support services
3.3.1.4 research within its educational mission, if appropriate
3.3.1.5 community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate

Internally-developed Assessment – Assessment instruments developed by Winthrop University faculty, staff, and/or administrators. Compare to externally-developed assessment.

Judgment by Accrediting Organization – Accrediting organizations have decision-making bodies (commissions) made up of administrators and faculty from institutions and programs as well as public members. These commissions may affirm accreditation for new institutions and programs, reaffirm accreditation for ongoing institutions and programs, and deny accreditation to institutions and programs.

Learning Outcomes – A statement that describes the measurable skills, knowledge, and attitudes that students should be able to do or demonstrate as a result of the course or program. Learning outcomes should be specific, measureable, agreed upon, realistic, and time framed.

Longitudinal Assessment – Assessments that collect data from the same population at different points in time.

Low-stakes Testing – A test which has little to no impact on a student. A low-stakes test is typically used to assess the progress of students or the effectiveness of teaching methodologies, resources, etc. but is not used in figuring a student's grade in a course. Students may not take a test seriously if they believe the outcome of the test has little or no impact on them. Compare to high stakes testing.

Methods – Describes how and when the outcomes will be assessed, and who will conduct the assessment; describes how assessment data will be disseminated to faculty and staff as appropriate.

Mission Statement – The mission statement is usually a short, one paragraph general explanation of what the program is, and why the program exists.

Norm-Reference – A test or other type of assessment designed to provide a measure of performance that is interpretable in terms of a student or support unit's relative standing in some known group. A norm-referenced test is designed to highlight achievement differences between and among students or administrative support units to produce a dependable rank order across a continuum of achievement from high achievers to low achievers.

Peer Review – Accreditation review is conducted primarily by faculty and administrative peers in the profession. These colleagues review the self-study and serve on visiting teams that review institutions and programs after the self-study is completed. Peers constitute the majority of members of the accrediting commissions or boards that make judgments about accrediting status.

Periodic External Review – Institutions and programs continue to be reviewed over time. They normally prepare a self-study and undergo a site visit each time.

Portfolio – Collections of multiple student work samples usually compiled over time and rated using rubrics. The design of the portfolio is dependent upon how the scoring results are going to be used.

Performance/Plan Evaluation – A systematic technique for gathering data through observation of behavior or process and evaluating the data based on a clearly articulated set of performance criteria; can be used for both students and personnel.

Program Assessment – The program outcomes are based on how each part is interacting with the rest of the parts, not on how each part is doing individually. The knowledge, skills, abilities that students achieve at the end of their programs are affected by how well courses and other experiences in the curriculum fit together and build on each other throughout the undergraduate years.

Program Objectives – Winthrop University uses the phrase "Student Learning Outcome."

Program Review – Evaluation of the effectiveness of an institution/division/department based primarily on student satisfaction indicators, objectives, and outcomes.

Qualitative Assessment – Assessment that relies on description rather than numerical scores or ratings. The emphasis is on the measurement of opinions, reflections and/or judgments. Examples include interview, focus groups, and observations. Compare with quantitative assessment.

Quantitative Assessment – Assessment that relies on numerical scores or ratings. The emphasis is on the use of statistics, cumulative numbers, aggregated data, and numerical measurements. Compare with qualitative assessment.

Random Sample – A sample drawn from the population such that every member of the population has an equal opportunity to be included in the sample.

Reliability – Reliability is the extent to which an experiment, test, or any measuring procedure yields the same result on repeated trials.

Rubrics – A set of categories that define and describe the important components of the work being completed, critiqued, and assessed. Each category contains a graduation of levels of completion or competence with a score assigned to each level and a clear description of what criteria need to be met to attain the score at each level. Evaluates performance and quality of work in attaining learning outcomes; assists in identifying strengths and weaknesses in performance based on department expectations or standards.

Self-study – Institutions and programs prepare a written summary of performance, based on accrediting organizations' standards.

Site visit – Accrediting organizations normally send a visiting team to review an institution or program. The self-study provides the foundation for the team visit. Teams, in addition to the peers described above, may also include public members (non-academics who have an interest in higher education). All team members are volunteers and are generally not compensated.

Summative Assessment – An assessment that is done at the conclusion of a course or some larger instructional period (e.g., at the end of the program). The purpose is to determine

success or to what extent the program/project/course met its goals and learning outcomes. Compare with formative assessment.

Tracking/Reporting – Quantitative method for evaluating program effectiveness and for systematic direct comparison.

Third Party – Person(s) other than those directly involved in the educational process (e.g., employers, parents, consultants).

Touchstone Program – The Touchstone Program is Winthrop University's distinctive foundational academic experience. Students employ courses ranging from 46 to 58 credit hours to achieve their Touchstone Goals. Within the program, four courses form the Touchstone Core. These courses capture the dynamic quality of Winthrop's learning community and provide students with a framework for learning and decision-making that they will use as they live, learn, and lead throughout their lives. Winthrop's Touchstone Program consists of the University's general education requirements.
http://www2.winthrop.edu/universitycollege/Touchstone/TouchstoneProgram.htm

Triangulation – The use of a combination of assessment methods in a study. An example of triangulation would be an assessment that incorporated surveys, interview, and observations.

Use of Results – Explains how specific results from assessment activities will be used for decision-making, strategic planning, program evaluation and improvement; assists in documenting changes and the reasons for the changes.

Validity – Degree to which a method or study accurately reflects or assesses the specific outcome that the institution/division/department is attempting to measure.

Value-added (growth or pre-post) – Compares results against student scores when they started or entered the program to the end of the program or course of study; student learning is demonstrated by determining how much students have gained through participation in the program.

Variable – Observable characteristics that vary among individual responses.

Electronic Resource List

Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
http://www.sacscoc.org/

Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools PDF document, *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*
http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf

Winthrop University SACS
http://www2.winthrop.edu/sacs/

Winthrop University office of Accreditation, Accountability, and Academic Services
http://www.winthrop.edu/accountability/

Winthrop University office of Assessment
http://www.winthrop.edu/accountability/default.aspx?id=6876

Institutional Assessment & Studies at the University of Virginia
http://www.web.virginia.edu/iaas/assessment/assessment.shtm

University of Virginia, *Assessment Guide: Seven Steps to Developing and Implementing a Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan*
http://www.web.virginia.edu/iaas/assessment/Assessment%20guide.pdf

National Survey of Student Engagement
http://nsse.iub.edu/index.cfm

American Association for Higher Education and Accreditation
http://www.aahea.org/

Winthrop University's Teaching and Learning Center
http://www2.winthrop.edu/tlc/

University College of Winthrop University
http://www.winthrop.edu/uc/

South Carolina Commission on Higher Education
http://www.che.sc.gov/

Assessment Resource Center of the University of Missouri
http://arc.missouri.edu/index.php?p=/CB/CBhome.htm

Collegiate Learning Assessment
http://www.collegiatelearningassessment.org/

Winthrop University's Mission Statement
http://www2.winthrop.edu/president/mission.htm

Winthrop University's Office of Institutional Research
http://www2.winthrop.edu/research/

Winthrop University's Institutional Review Board
http://www2.winthrop.edu/spar/Human%20Subjects.htm