

# Assurance of Student Learning for Academic Programs

## 2025-2030 Assessment Cycle Guide

Assurance of Student Learning (ASL) is the annual assessment process used to evaluate how well all academic programs are helping students achieve intended learning outcomes. The purpose of ASL is to support continuous improvement by encouraging programs to reflect on student performance, identify strengths, and make informed adjustments to enhance learning. This process is not intended to be punitive or to evaluate individual faculty; rather, it is designed to foster meaningful conversations about teaching, curriculum, and student success. While assessment is required for institutional accreditation, it is also widely recognized as a best practice in higher education. By engaging in regular assessment, programs can make data-informed decisions, strengthen curriculum alignment, and ensure students are developing the knowledge and skills needed for success beyond graduation. Please note that the ASL process meets institutional accreditation requirements. *Programs may have additional accreditation requirements depending on the college or program.*

The Provost's Office is also committed to continuous improvement throughout the assessment cycle and will regularly review the process to identify opportunities for refinement and support. Feedback from academic programs will play an important role in shaping adjustments to ensure the process remains meaningful, manageable, and effective. The goal is to provide academic departments with flexibility to assess their programs in ways that best align with their discipline, curriculum, and student population, while still maintaining clear expectations and minimum requirements. By balancing flexibility with consistency, the assessment cycle is designed to support thoughtful, discipline-appropriate evaluation while ensuring institutional accountability and continuous improvement.

## Accredited Programs vs. Non-Accredited Programs

**Accredited Programs:** Programs with specialized accreditation often complete annual assessment reports for their accrediting agencies that may already meet many institutional assessment expectations. To reduce duplication of effort, accredited programs that submit annual assessment reports to their accrediting body may complete a condensed version of the Assurance of Student Learning (ASL) report for cycle years 2-5. These programs are required to complete only selected sections of the institutional report in years 2-5 and will submit their accreditor report alongside the condensed submission. Accredited programs

that do not complete an annual assessment should follow the process in place for non-accredited programs. The ASL process does not substitute for program accreditation activities and requirements.

**Non-Accredited Programs:** Non-accredited programs are expected to complete the full ASL report to ensure consistent documentation of student learning, continuous improvement, and institutional effectiveness. This approach recognizes the rigorous assessment work already completed by accredited programs while maintaining institutional expectations and supporting meaningful assessment practices across all academic programs.

## Assessment Documents

The Assurance of Student Learning (ASL) process includes several key documents designed to help departments monitor curriculum alignment, track assessment activities, and preserve institutional knowledge over time. These materials ensure that important program information remains accessible and consistent, particularly when program leadership or faculty roles change. All document templates are available on the Assurance of Student Learning webpage.

**Assessment Plan:** The Assessment Plan serves as a roadmap for how a program will measure student learning and use results for continuous improvement over the assessment cycle. This document outlines program learning outcomes, identifies assessment methods and criteria for success, establishes timelines, and defines roles and responsibilities for assessment activities. Because assessment is an ongoing process, the plan is designed to be a dynamic, living document that evolves as programs make curricular changes, analyze results, and refine their approach to improving student learning. Programs are expected to review the assessment plan annually, to ensure the plan remains current and aligned with program goals and institutional expectations. The assessment plan should be resubmitted with the ASL report, if changes are made to it during an academic year. All programs leading to a transcribed credential must complete an assessment plan in Cycle 1. The Provost's Office will annually monitor the assessment plans to ensure all learning outcomes are assessed by year 5.

**Curriculum Maps:** Curriculum maps are tools used to show how program learning outcomes are intentionally developed across a program's curriculum. Required for graduate programs, undergraduate majors, and certificate programs at both levels, curriculum maps align core program requirements with the program's learning outcomes and identify where each outcome is introduced, reinforced, mastered, and assessed.

These maps help programs ensure that students have sufficient opportunities to develop and demonstrate each learning outcome throughout their academic experience. While separate maps are not required for every concentration, curriculum maps should reflect all required courses or course categories that students must complete as part of the program, ensuring a comprehensive view of how learning outcomes are achieved. Curriculum maps should be reviewed and updated (if needed) annually.

**Skills Maps:** Skills maps are required for undergraduate majors and certificate programs and are used to identify how the Kentucky Graduate Profile's 10 Essential Skills are developed across a program. These maps indicate where the overall degree program introduces and reinforces each skill, as well as which skills students are expected to master by graduation. Required by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, skills maps help programs intentionally embed workforce-ready competencies throughout the curriculum. Programs should review and update their skills maps annually, as needed, to ensure continued alignment with program goals and evolving curricular expectations.

**ASL Report:** The Annual Assurance of Student Learning (ASL) Report documents how academic programs assess student learning, evaluate results, and use findings to improve curriculum and student success. The report provides programs an opportunity to reflect on student performance related to program learning outcomes, describe assessment methods, summarize findings, and identify planned improvements. In addition, the report helps ensure that assessment activities remain aligned with program goals, institutional priorities, and accreditation expectations. The ASL report also serves as a historical record of program assessment efforts, supporting continuity, transparency, and ongoing continuous improvement over time. A discussion of the last five years of ASL data is required for the Academic Program Review Process. Reports are due annually.

## Assessment Guidelines

Flexibility is the foundation of the 2025–2030 assessment cycle. The following guidelines establish minimum expectations for academic programs while allowing departments to determine assessment strategies that best align with their discipline, curriculum, and program structure. Programs are encouraged to design meaningful assessment approaches within these parameters:

1. All programs leading to a transcribed credential must participate in assessment. This includes undergraduate majors, graduate programs, and certificates at both levels. Low-enrollments and/or programs that are interdisciplinary or flexible are required to complete the assessment process.

2. Assessment plans should be reviewed annually to ensure the plan is current. If curricular revisions were made in the previous year that impact the plan, a revised plan must be included with the ASL report submission.
3. Curriculum maps should be reviewed annually. If changes are needed to the curriculum maps because of curricular changes, new maps must be included with the ASL report submission.
4. Undergraduate programs (majors and certificates) must submit a skills map to ensure alignment with the Kentucky Graduate Profile and to confirm that essential skills are being intentionally developed. If changes are needed to the skills maps because of curricular changes, new maps must be included with the ASL report submission.
5. Program faculty should be actively involved in the assessment process to promote shared understanding of the assessment plan, data collection, and use of results for continuous improvement.
6. Programs must submit an ASL report annually and ensure that all program learning outcomes are assessed at least once within the five-year cycle. (We recommend that you assess learning outcomes twice within an assessment cycle to show how changes over time for the Comprehensive Report in year 5. However, we recognize that each program may have unique assessment needs.)
7. The final year of the assessment cycle may be used to collect additional data but should also include a comprehensive review of findings from the entire assessment cycle to inform future planning and program improvement.
8. All ASL reports must be reviewed by the Dean's Office before submission to ensure quality, consistency, and alignment with college expectations.
9. New programs must submit an assessment plan and curriculum map. Undergraduate programs must also submit a skills map. Program Coordinators for new academic programs should work with their Associate Dean and Assistant Provost for Accreditation & Assessment to determine how to complete the assessment process for the 2025-2030 cycle.
10. Colleges may establish additional assessment requirements beyond the minimum guidelines to support discipline-specific needs and college-level priorities.

## 2025-2030 Assessment Cycles

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| 1 | <b>Academic Year 2025-2026: Planning and Mapping</b> |   |
|   | <b>Items Required:</b>                               | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assessment Plan</li> <li>2. Curriculum Map (graduate and undergraduate programs)</li> <li>3. Skills Map (for undergraduate programs only)</li> <li>4. Cycle 1 ASL Report</li> </ol> |
|   | <b>Due Dates:</b>                                    | <p>May 15 –Curriculum Map and Skill Map (undergraduate programs only)</p> <p>September 30 – Assessment Plan and Cycle 1 report due to the Dean’s Office</p> <p>October 30 – Cycle 1 report due to Provost’s Office</p>        |

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| 2 | <b>Academic Year 2026-2027: Data Collection/Analysis</b> |  |
|   | <b>Items Required:</b>                                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cycle 2 ASL Report</li> <li>2. Assessment Plan (if updated)</li> <li>3. Curriculum Map (if updated)</li> <li>4. Skills Map (for undergraduate programs only) (if updated)</li> </ol> |
|   | <b>Due Dates:</b>  | <p>September 30 – Cycle 2 report due to the Dean’s Office (Submit other plans and maps if updates are needed)</p> <p>October 30 – Cycle 2 report due to Provost’s Office</p>   |

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| 3 | <b>Academic Year 2027-2028: Data Collection/Analysis</b> |  |
|   | <b>Items Required:</b>                                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cycle 3 ASL Report</li> <li>2. Assessment Plan (if updated)</li> <li>3. Curriculum Map (if updated)</li> <li>4. Skills Map (for undergraduate programs only) (if updated)</li> </ol> |
|   | <b>Due Dates:</b>  | <p>September 30 – Cycle 3 report due to the Dean’s Office (Submit other plans and maps if updates are needed)</p> <p>October 30 – Cycle 3 report due to Provost’s Office</p>   |

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| 4 | <b>Academic Year 2028-2029: Data Collection/Analysis</b> |  |
|   | <b>Items Required:</b>                                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cycle 4 ASL Report</li> <li>2. Assessment Plan (if updated)</li> <li>3. Curriculum Map (if updated)</li> <li>4. Skills Map (for undergraduate programs only) (if updated)</li> </ol> |
|   | <b>Due Dates:</b>  | <p>September 30 – Cycle 4 report due to the Dean’s Office (Submit other plans and maps if updates are needed)</p> <p>October 30 – Cycle 4 report due to Provost’s Office</p>   |

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| 5 | <b>Academic Year 2029-2030: Data Collection/Analysis</b> |  |
|   | <b>Items Required:</b>                                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cycle 5 ASL Report</li> <li>2. Assessment Plan (if updated)</li> <li>3. Curriculum Map (if updated)</li> <li>4. Skills Map (for undergraduate programs only) (if updated)</li> </ol> |
|   | <b>Due Dates:</b>  | <p>September 30 – Cycle 5 report due to the Dean’s Office (Submit other plans and maps if updates are needed)</p> <p>October 30 – Cycle 5 report due to Provost’s Office</p>   |

## Sample Assessment Cycles

| Program A:<br>Alternating LO Assessment   | Program B:<br>Continuous Improvement Assessment   | Program C:<br>Mid-Cycle Assessment  |
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| <p><b>Major:</b> BS in TopperNomics<br/><b>Total Program Learning Outcomes:</b> 6</p> <p><b>AY 2025-2026:</b> Assessment Plan outlining the year each learning outcome will be assessed.</p> <p><b>AY 2026-2027:</b> Data collected and analyzed for learning outcomes 1 and 3.</p> <p><b>AY 2027-2028:</b> Data collected and analyzed for learning outcomes 2 and 5.</p> <p><b>AY 2028-2029:</b> Data collected and analyzed for learning outcomes 4 and 6.</p> <p><b>AY 2029-2030:</b> Comprehensive Review of all learning outcomes and discuss program improvements.</p> | <p><b>Major:</b> BS in TopperNomics<br/><b>Total Program Learning Outcomes:</b> 6</p> <p><b>AY 2025-2026:</b> Assessment Plan outlining the year each learning outcome will be assessed.</p> <p><b>AY 2026-2027:</b> Data collected and analyzed for learning outcomes 1–3. Programs identify specific areas for improvement.</p> <p><b>AY 2027-2028:</b> Implementation of improvements based on prior findings. Data collected for learning outcomes 1–3 to evaluate impact of changes.</p> <p><b>AY 2028-2029:</b> Data collected and analyzed for learning outcomes 4–6. Programs identify specific areas for improvement.</p> <p><b>AY 2029-2030:</b> Implementation of improvements for outcomes 4–6 and comprehensive review of all learning outcomes.</p> | <p><b>Major:</b> BS in TopperNomics<br/><b>Total Program Learning Outcomes:</b> 6</p> <p><b>AY 2025-2026:</b> Assessment Plan outlining the year each learning outcome will be assessed and collect assessment data for outcomes 1-6.</p> <p><b>AY 2026-2027:</b> Analyze and report findings from assessment data and identify program improvement steps.</p> <p><b>AY 2027-2028:</b> Report progress on program improvement steps and collect assessment data.</p> <p><b>AY 2028-2029:</b> Analyze and report findings from assessment data and identify program improvement steps.</p> <p><b>AY 2029-2030:</b> Comprehensive Review of Data and Changes.</p> |

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **My program is accredited; however, our accreditor does not require an annual assessment. Do I still need to submit the annual ASL report?**

Yes. Annual assessment is required as part of the University's accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Therefore, all academic programs leading to a transcribed credential must participate in the annual Assurance of Student Learning (ASL) process, regardless of specialized accreditation requirements.

### **My program has low enrollment. How should I determine a sample size?**

Programs with fewer than 10 students should assess all enrolled students. For programs with consistently low enrollment, departments may consider strategies such as aligning learning outcomes across related programs within the college, developing a recruitment or marketing plan to increase enrollment, or reviewing the long-term viability of the program. Additionally, ASL documentation is required as part of the Academic Program Review (APR) process for all programs.

### **My program is interdisciplinary and includes limited departmental courses. Is assessment still required?**

Yes. All programs are required to participate in an annual assessment to ensure student success and continuous improvement. Interdisciplinary programs should develop methods for collecting direct evidence of student learning from enrolled students. At a minimum, programs should identify ways to assess key skills or competencies that students are expected to develop.

### **Can programs align their assessment cycle with the Academic Program Review (APR) cycle?**

At this time, programs are expected to follow the established University assessment cycle. Maintaining a consistent cycle supports institutional data management, reporting, and accreditation expectations. Allowing individual programs to align solely with APR cycles would create multiple reporting timelines across colleges, which is not feasible for institutional tracking and support.

### **Do programs need to submit assessment plans and maps annually if no updates are made?**

No. However, if curricular revisions are made through CourseLeaf that impact the plan or maps, a revised plan or map is needed for documentation.

**Do all Program Learning Outcomes need to be assessed every year?**

No. All program learning outcomes should be assessed within the established assessment cycle to ensure comprehensive evaluation of student learning.

**What if our program made no curricular changes this year?**

Programs are still expected to complete the annual assessment process; however, assessment plans are only required when changes are made.

**What qualifies as a direct measure of student learning?**

Direct measures include assignments or assessments that demonstrate student learning, such as capstone projects, exams, portfolios, presentations, clinical evaluations, or embedded course assignments aligned with program learning outcomes. Indirect measures, such as surveys or exit interviews, may supplement but should not replace direct measures.

**Do certificate programs need to participate in assessment?**

Yes. All programs that lead to a transcribed credential, including certificate programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, are required to participate in the assessment process.

**Who should complete the ASL report?**

The program coordinator typically leads the assessment process; however, the assessment should involve program faculty. Faculty collaboration helps ensure shared understanding of outcomes, meaningful interpretation of results, and informed program improvements.

**What if our program shares courses with another program?**

Programs may use shared courses as assessment points, but each program must still evaluate student learning specific to its own program learning outcomes.

**What happens after we submit the ASL report?**

Reports are reviewed by the Dean's Office and the Office of the Provost. Feedback may be provided to support continuous improvement and strengthen assessment practices.

## Resources & Assistance

Visit the Assurance of Student Learning website to find templates and resources to help with the annual assessment process.