

Assessment of the Technical Certificates (TC): Four Strategies

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- The outcomes for all active certificates open to degree-seeking students must be assessed at least once in a five-year cycle. Please focus on mastery level assessment (the complete certificate rather than one specific course in the sequence).
- If your certificate students are all graduating AS degree students in your program, and meet the outcome in their program courses (for example, for communication), when reporting results for the "communication" outcomes within your certificate report please use the following text: *"Since the students are part of the AS degree program they are assessed and results are reported at the program-level. Please see xxx where we reported these results in Xitracs for this cycle."* We need to know where you reported the results at the program level.
- If you have 25 or fewer students complete your certificate please gather your results over several years and then analyze them. This means that your faculty members will need to collect data over time. Here are four examples of certificate-level assessment. These are only suggestions – you may want to mix and match aspects of these examples to best design your approach:
 1. Assess all outcomes every year, report on one (this has the benefit of creating a consistent annual assessment).
 2. Alter a program-level assessment activity to reflect the outcomes of the TC and track performance of TC students.
 3. Assess all TCs in one year of a 5-year cycle, report and create a plan that crosses certificates.
 4. Offer a shared assessment activity across all TCs, assess them together (helpful when there are only a few students in each).

Examples of Each Strategy for Assessing the Technical Certificates (TC)

- 1. Example: Faculty members assess the certificate outcomes in one of the courses** that is offered toward the end of the sequence. While the faculty members are only required to assess the outcomes once within a five year cycle, they decide to collect assessment data for all outcomes each year using one assignment and a rubric. This decision was made to keep everyone consistent – especially part-time faculty – with the same assignment and rubric each year. Each year they discuss the results specific to one of the outcomes, and their plan for the certificate is based on that discussion. They use a Canvas “sandbox” to organize and store their data and they examine the impact of the certificate and create a plan to improve or change it. They worked with their instructional designers to create the Canvas space.
- 2. Example: As part of the capstone assessment** faculty members take their student-level results and separate out those who had completed the certificates. They assess for the certificate outcomes as part of the final project by adding the certificate outcomes to the exam or to the rubric. The assessment results need to be connected to the student VID. They work with the institutional assessment office to design this assignment and its rubric. They work with the institutional research office to request the data needed to track which students completed the certificates (tracked by VID). They examine the impact of the certificate and create a plan to improve or change it.
- 3. Example: A program has six certificates.** Faculty members have decided to use the fourth year in their five year a cycle to focus on all certificates examining the results of a final project collected across all certificates and grading them with an (analytic) rubric that assesses for all of the certificate outcomes that are not already assessed at the program-level. Students’ names are removed from the work and faculty members are able to grade a mix of final project results – not necessarily from their own students. They work with the assessment office to coordinate the activities needed to structure this assessment activity. They also ask Advisory Board members to serve as external reviewers of the work.
- 4. Example: One of the AS programs has three certificates.** They are very specialized and small numbers of students enroll in each. All three have a communication outcome that is assessed at the program level and a critical thinking outcome that is assessed at the program level. Each certificate has a third outcome specific to each certificate focus (not at the program-level). Each focuses on management skills and begins “Students will be able to manage...” Across these three certificates an exam is given towards the end of the course sequence with a scenario and students must answer management questions specific to the certificate focus. Each exam has a slightly different scenario, specific to its focus on a specialized management skill. The results across all three certificates are collected and assessed in a “compare and contrast” of the students’ performance approach. When the results are combined this gives the faculty members a larger number of student results to assess. The faculty members aim to understand the impact of each certificate and also how student performance compares across these three certificates. They examine the impact of each certificate and create a plan to improve or change it.