

FAQ – 2008-2009 Annual Reports

What modifications have been made to the annual report process for 2008-2009 Annual Reports?

- For Part I-SP and Part III-A, a request to link unit strategic goals and objectives to the University's Strategic Priorities.
- For Parts I-ALC, I-ALP, and I-AFP, suggestion to duplicate the template for reporting of assessments for more than one domain for a given program or course.
- For Part I-AFP, a reminder that departments offering Academic Foundations/General Education courses are required to report on at least two student learning outcomes.
- Part II-C, Community Engagement Activities is now required for all units.

Why do we use templates for reporting on assessment activities?

The templates for reporting assessment work for undergraduate programs, graduate programs, and departmental contributions to Academic Foundations/General Studies are intended to simplify the reporting process for this work. Information requested in the template will help document the effective use of assessment evidence for continuous improvement of programs. Over time, the comparison of assessment-based evidence of student learning in a given domain across multiple years will enable departments to evaluate and document the impact of assessment of the quality of student learning. These data will be particularly useful for the documentation of our use of assessment evidence in the SACS Fifth-Year Interim Report and the Impact Report of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) on Student Learning.

How will information from the Annual Reports be used in the Fifth-Year Interim Report submitted to SACS in 2011?

In order to comply with conditions related to US Department of Education recognition of accrediting agencies, SACS now requires a Fifth-Year Interim Report, submitted five years prior to the institution's next decennial review. UWF will be included in the cohort of institutions that are required to submit a Fifth-Year Interim Report in 2011. The information collected about program assessment and use of assessment evidence for continuous improvement will be important in documenting continued compliance with the accreditation standards on which the Fifth-Year Report is based.

How will information from the Annual Reports be used in the Impact Report of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) on Student Learning submitted to SACS in March 2011?

An Impact Report on the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is required as a component of the Fifth-Year Interim Report. Guidelines for the Impact Report posted to the SACS web site specifically request "a description of the QEP's direct impact on student learning." The information requested in the Annual Reports concerning observations of changes in student learning based on the comparison of assessment evidence from multiple years will enable UWF to document this impact.

Must departments complete all sections related to assessment?

The Annual Report requests separate reporting of information related to the collection and use of assessment data from each department that contributes one or more courses to the General Studies / Academic Foundations curriculum. Separate reports are required for each undergraduate and graduate program (defined as programs that are identified by a unique CIP code).

How much detail is needed when describing departmental assessments?

A brief description (in two or three sentences) for each of the items in the template will suffice. The description of the assessment method should clearly document that the department used a direct measure of student learning. A brief “executive summary” of the important trends, strengths, and weaknesses observed in student learning will be more meaningful to external audiences than an extended summary of actual data. If departments clearly indicate that these summaries are based on direct evidence rather than anecdote, opinion, or self-report, the summaries should provide sufficient evidence for effective assessment work.

Specific examples of the use of assessment evidence to either improve curriculum, instructional strategies, or assessment methods are all important components of the documentation of assessment work for SACS and other external agencies. Documenting decisions made to revise and improve assessment procedures is a valid and important use of assessment for the continuous improvement of programs, as is documenting assessment-based improvements in curriculum or instructional strategies. A compelling description of the use of assessment evidence for decision making is one that clearly establishes a logical connection between the assessment evidence collected and decisions made or program changes implemented.

Examples of specific embedded assessments, including descriptions of the assignment or nature of the work and the rubric used to derive the measure of student learning outcome(s), will be helpful as concrete examples of the quality of assessment work underway at UWF. If your department can provide documentation for an assessment that might serve as a good illustration of the quality of assessment work currently under way at UWF in future reports to SACS and other external agencies, please include this material in an appendix to the Annual Report. Such examples are not required.

Why has Part II-C Community Engagement been added to the Annual Report?

Increasingly, the University is asked to document both the nature of and effectiveness of its engagement with the “community” (the definition of which may encompass local, regional, state-wide, national, and international venues). As a member of the Florida’s State University System, the University is expected to engage in service to our local and state-wide constituencies. Further, SACS has added a standard pertaining to identification and assessment of community service activities. Additionally, the University may seek identification by the Carnegie Foundation as a “Community Engaged” institution in recognition of the University’s strengths in curriculum-related involvement and in recognition of its outreach and partnership activities with the community.

What planning horizon should be used for goals/objectives identified in Part III-A Strategic Planning Goals and Objectives?

Departments/units may choose a one-year planning horizon (i.e., 2009-2010) or a multi-year time frame (e.g., two years 2009-2011). It is recommended that the planning horizon not be longer than five years.

Removed from the Annual Report template is the requirement to submit goals/objectives for both the one-year and five-year horizons. Departments/units may wish to continue to identify both short and long term goals/objectives but reporting of such in the Annual Report is no longer required.

Please note that the goals/objectives identified in Part III-A become the basis for reporting results in Part I-SP Summary Report on Status of Strategic Planning Goals/Objectives in the following year's Annual Report.

Who should complete Part III-B New Degree Program Projections?

Unless specifically requested by the dean of the college, academic departments need not complete this section. The deans will provide information about proposed changes in programs in the college reports to the Provost.