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Academic Chairpersons Conference
Proceedings

33rd Academic Chairpersons Conference,
Charleston, SC

Assessment Manual: Practical Tool for Keeping Assessment Processes on Track

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Recommended Citation

Griffin, Leslie L. (2016). "Assessment Manual: Practical Tool for Keeping Assessment Processes on Track," *Academic Chairpersons Conference Proceedings*. <https://newprairiepress.org/accp/2016/Evaluation/2>

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The national outcry for accountability (AACTE, 2015; Brabeck & Worrell, 2014) in higher education places academic department chairs squarely in the crosshairs for both developing and managing an often relatively sophisticated assessment system in which they track program data to monitor learner outcomes and guide program improvements. Within this process, they are also often tasked with identifying an electronic data management system. The formulation of such a system and its management are fraught with challenges, whether in assisting current program faculty or in acclimating new faculty for sustainability. The effective department chair must accept the gauntlet and seek efficient means of communicating clearly with all stakeholders regarding the unit's goals, objectives, and outcomes. The use of an assessment manual can be a highly effective means of sharing unit expectations, providing clear pathways and examples, producing a repository for standard documents, and articulating a timeline for implementing the comprehensive assessment system.

The model produced at a southeastern regional university incorporates components that are standard across any academic unit: the provision for electronic management of data; the identification of standard and key assessments across units; the establishment of clear pathways for sharing and considering data; the use of standard formats for data analysis and summary; a timeline for meetings and retreats that funnel assessment results appropriately throughout the unit governance system; and an overall reference tool for all faculty members, housed in one document that serves as an easy reference.

Participants in this session will be provided a copy of this model assessment manual and will participate in exercises designed to show them how it can be adapted to their respective academic settings. There will be clear examples provided that address how data can be aggregated and disaggregated at key points to adequately assess all facets of a unit's operations.