



Office of Assessment & Academic Program Review

Annual Institutional Academic Assessment Report AY 21-22

June 2023



Overview

This report communicates themes, results, and impacts from academic program assessment across the University of New Mexico for the 2021-2022 academic year. The report describes the effects of academic assessment, perceptions of assessment leadership from colleges, schools, branches, and the Office of Assessment and Academic Program Review (OAAPR), evidence of assessment elements, and institutional participation rates.

Key Takeaways

- Academic assessment **participation** has dropped in the last couple years. The OAAPR would like to see participation increase by 13% (~39 degree programs) to reach an average rate of 65% participation over all degree programming.
- Assessment **impact**: 51% of programs reported making program changes due to their assessment while 46% made changes to assessment processes themselves.
- For the first time, the OAAPR analyzed **data by type of degree** (graduate, undergraduate, and associate/branch) on top of calculating overall counts and percentages. Please see below for this nuanced data.
- **UNM Learning Goals** of students attaining 'Skills' and 'Knowledge' are frequently incorporated into student learning outcomes (SLOs), while 'Responsibility' is less integrated at all levels. The OAAPR is looking for exemplary ways that 'Responsibility' is being taught and assessed to support UNM's goals and promote a rise in this area of learning.
- 'Demonstrate' is the most common verb in SLOs reported by instructors. However, it is often used with nouns or phrases that better reflect the intended learning behavior (e.g., 'demonstrate the ability to research,' 'demonstrate communication skills,' etc.). **Eliminating 'demonstrate'** and focusing on the main verb for such outcomes ('research,' 'communicate,' etc.) provides a better understanding of the student behaviors expected by instructors and helps the OAAPR analyze SLOs.

Tips for Future Improvement

- **Assessment tools**: Specific measurements should be used in place of overarching GPAs or course grades, which indicate overall performance but do not allow a fine-grained sense of where student outcomes are being achieved.
- **Alignment**: Units should use multiple measures to assess the same SLO, which allows for triangulating of data and pinpointing areas for improvement.
- **Benchmarks**: If 100% of students are consistently meeting a SLO benchmark over multiple years, that SLO should be revisited to consider a different benchmark. If benchmarks are not being met, actionable items should be determined and reported to reach the benchmark in future years.

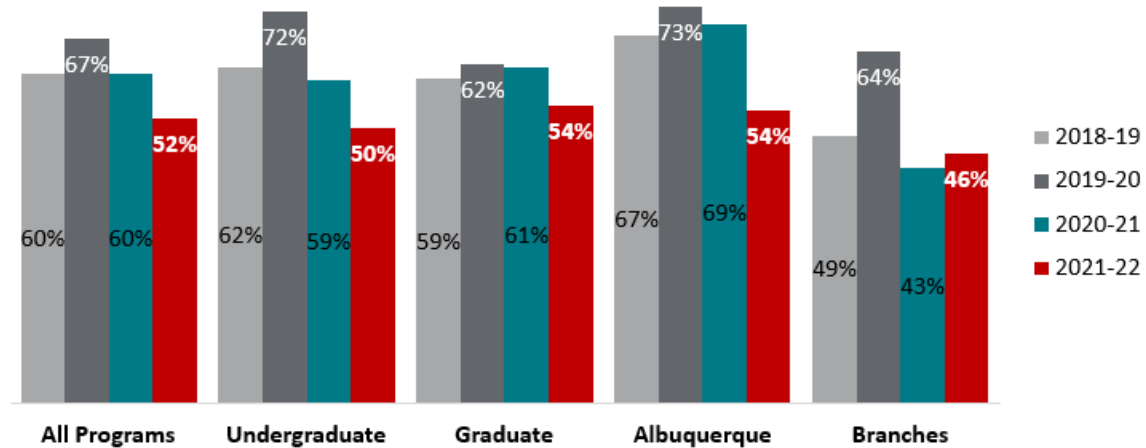
Results

Assessment Participation

The OAAPR received assessment plans and reports for 158 degree programs, or 52.1% of all programs, including 54.3% of graduate programs and 50.3% of undergraduate programs (a decline from the last two years). Assessment plans and reports, College Assessment Review Committee (CARC) data forms, state of assessment narratives, and maturity rubrics came from these 12 colleges, schools, and branches:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| • Anderson School of Management | • School of Architecture & Planning |
| • College of Arts & Sciences | • School of Engineering |
| • College of Education & Human Sciences | • School of Medicine |
| • College of Public Health | • UNM Gallup |
| • College of University Libraries & Learning Sciences | • UNM Los Alamos |
| • Honors College | • UNM Valencia |

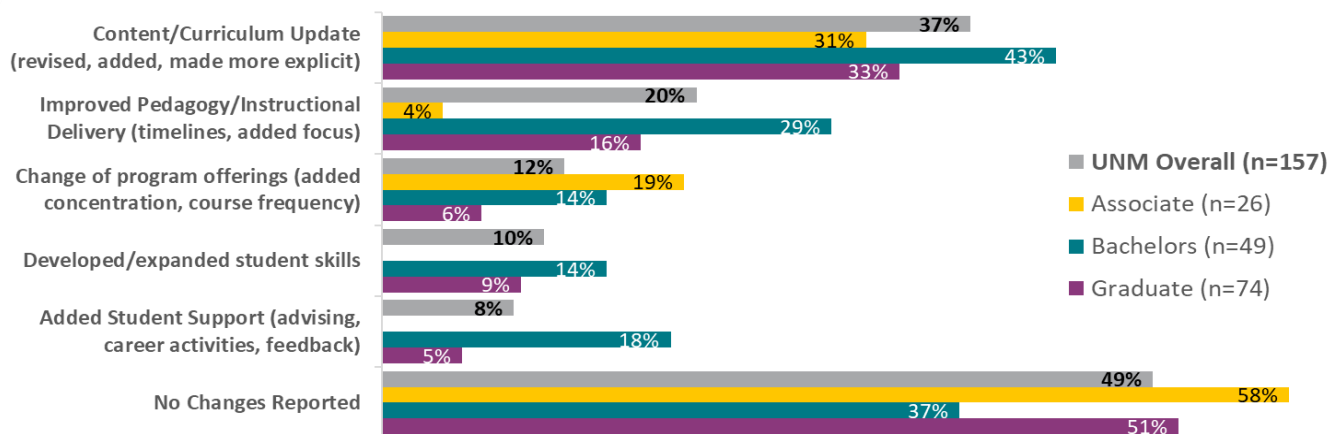
1. Assessment Participation Rates AYs 18-19 to 21-22



In year-over-year terms, these proportions generally represent a decline from previous years, though that is partly due to programs that had previously participated not submitting in time for this year's analysis. Branches are starting to see more participation again due in large part to the efforts of CARC chairs.

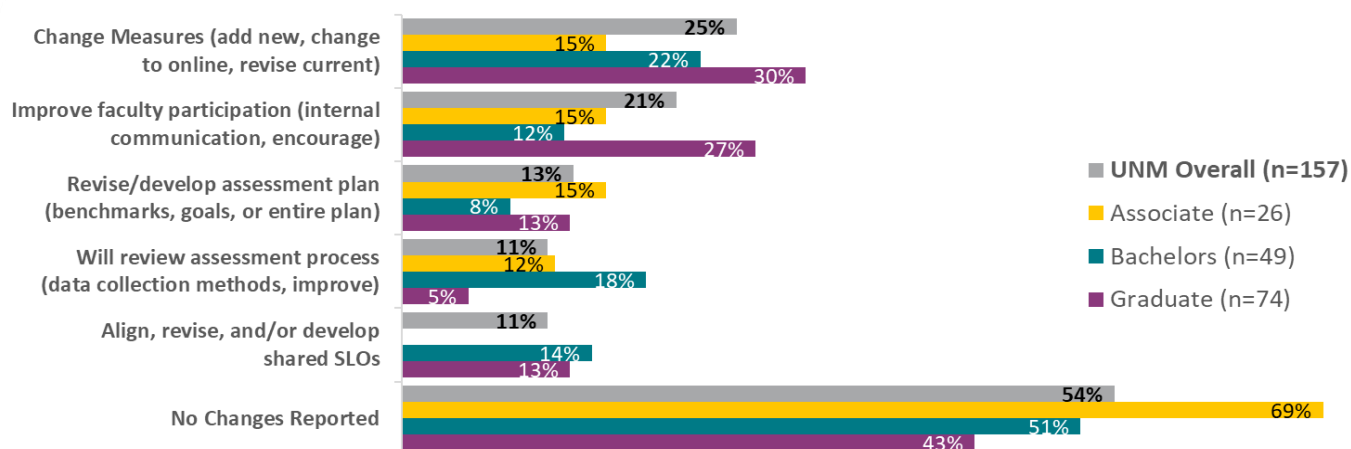
Impact of Assessment

2. Program Revisions by Category and Degree Type



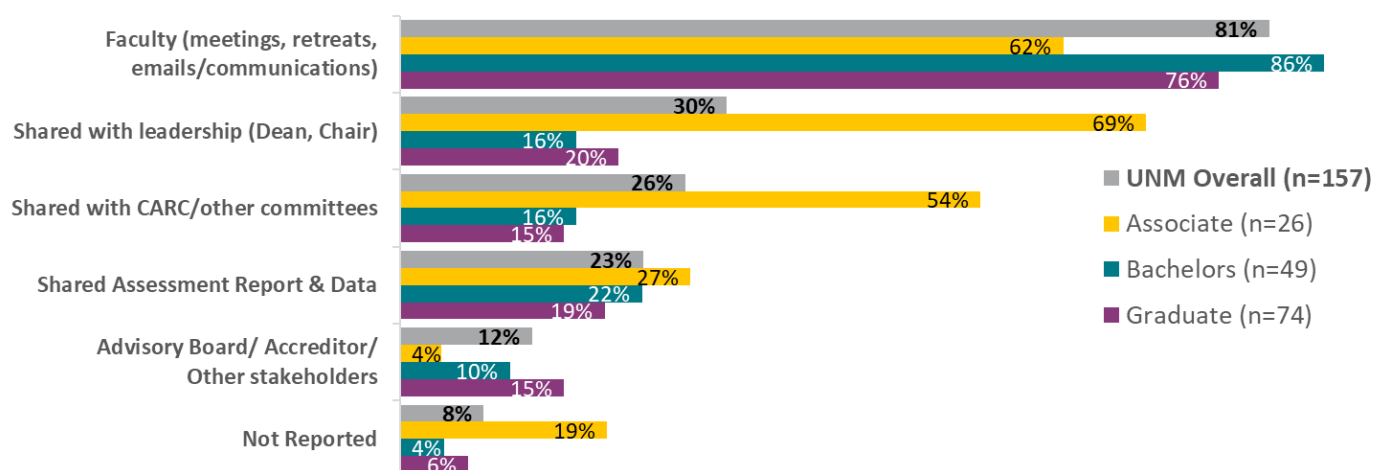
The primary goal of assessment is continuous improvement of academic programs, and 51% of participants overall reported making program changes, with content and curriculum updates being the most common.

3. Assessment Revisions by Category and Degree Type



Program assessment also often results in changes to assessment processes themselves, and 46% of programs overall reported such changes. Revisions to assessment were especially prevalent among graduate programs, with 57% of them making at least one change, and efforts at adjusting measures and increasing faculty participation were especially common.

4. Communication Methods by Audience and Degree Type



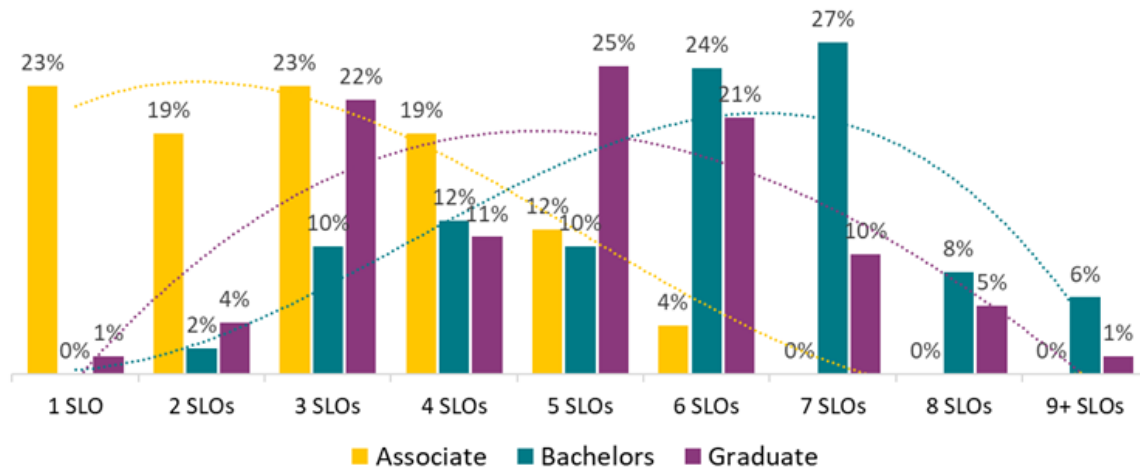
Communicating assessment results is vital for sharing past impact, present status and for creating future changes. 92% of programs reported at least one method of sharing information about assessment. The high amount of communication with faculty stands to reason given their levels of involvement with assessment. Seeking similar levels with other groups, such as leadership and CARCs, may serve to create more dialogue and therefore more awareness and participation in institutional assessment. Branches tended to share with leadership and CARCs/other committees at higher rates than UNM Albuquerque.

Reported Assessment Elements

Student learning outcomes (SLOs): A total of 754 SLOs were reported encompassing 138 student behaviors.

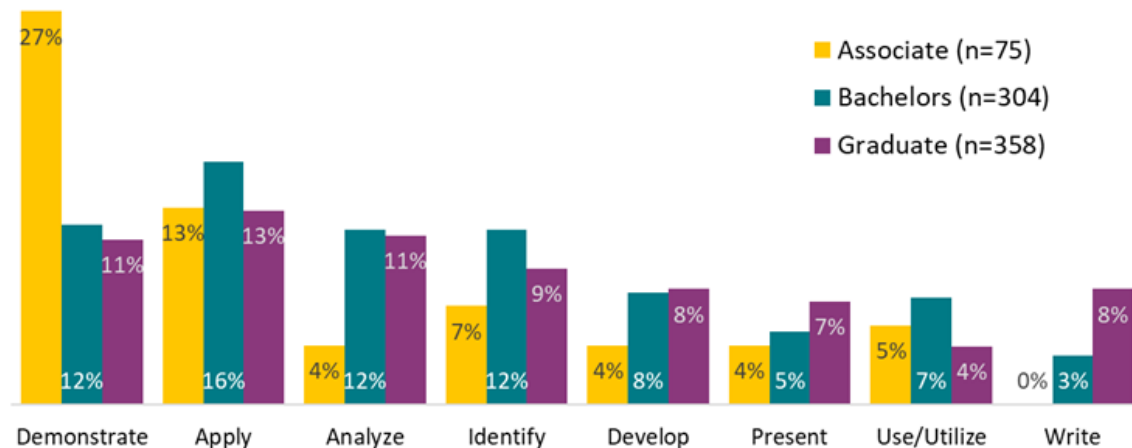
5. SLO Count by Program and Degree Type

Associate Average = 2.9 | Bachelor's Average = 5.9 | Graduate Average = 4.9



UNM averaged 4.9 SLOs per program, with notable differences in the distribution among associate, bachelor's, and graduate programs. Evidence-based practices suggest assessing 3-5 SLOs per academic program, and currently, 49% of UNM programs do measure 3-5 SLOs. Higher amounts of SLOs often represent programs that have a larger number of SLOs prescribed to them as part of accreditation requirements. Branches tended to have a smaller number of SLOs overall.

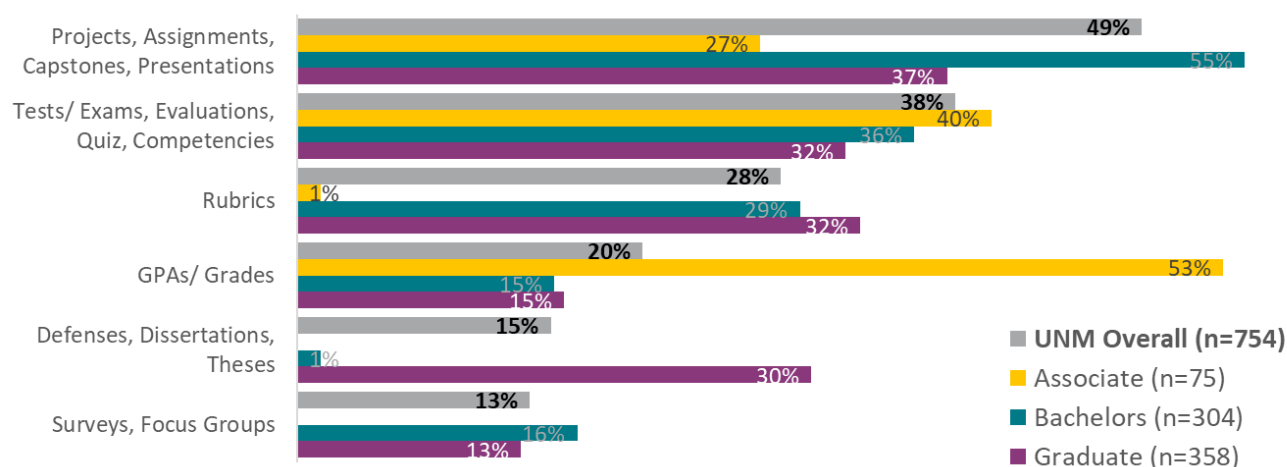
6. SLO Verb Frequency by Degree Type (% = Frequency / Total SLOs)



The verbs used in SLOs help to indicate student learning levels and instructor expectations for learning. Some verbs changed in prevalence with degree level, perhaps reflecting differences in focus among the groups. The above graph shows the top eight verbs by frequency. For a complete list of verbs used across campuses, see the cover page.

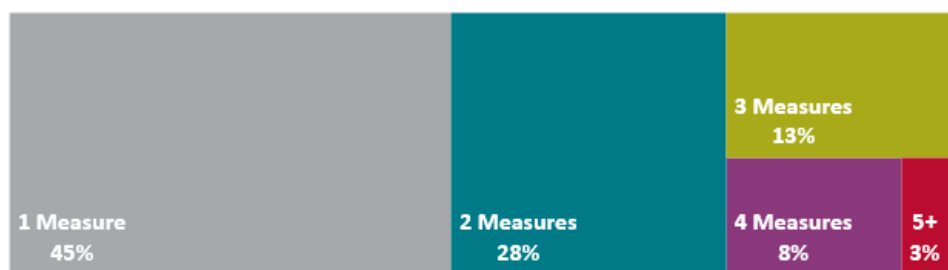
The behavior 'demonstrate' was found in over a quarter of SLOs (26%) across all programs. Many of the SLOs including this verb had wording about demonstrating application, skills, the ability to do something, etc. For the sake of comparison, such instances were interpreted as other verbs and removed from the counts of 'demonstrate.' For SLO authors, it may be worth avoiding nominalizations and thinking about what the underlying behavior is that students should demonstrate for assessment purposes.

7. SLO Measures by Category and Degree Type (% = Frequency / Total SLOs)



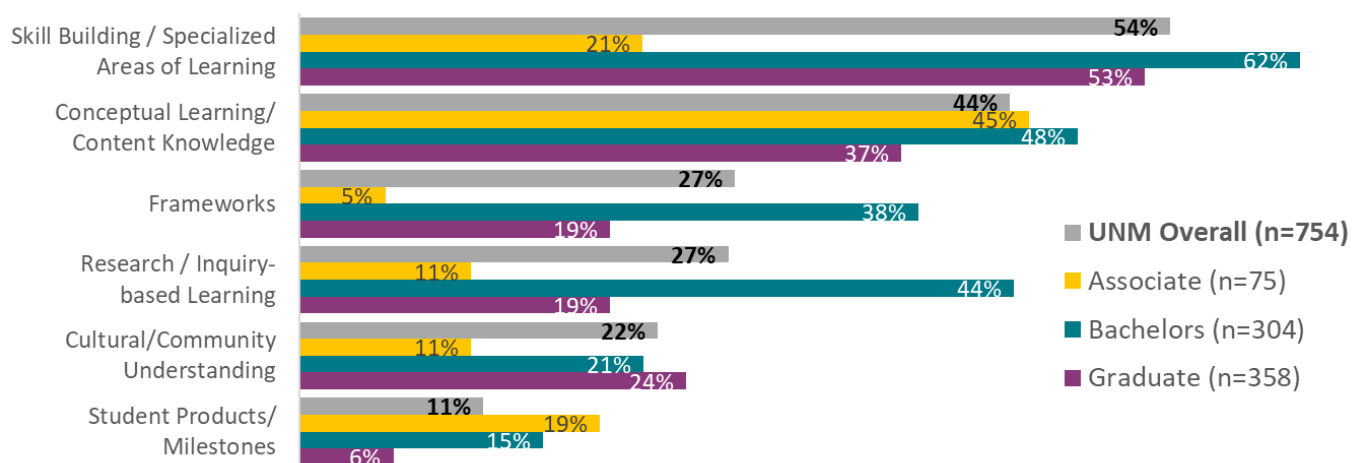
Programs measure SLO attainment in a variety of ways, with projects and tests being the most common methods. Of note, 20% of UNM programs reported using GPAs or grades to determine success. While these measures are accurate in terms of overall performance, they are not suitable for assessing individual learning outcomes. Although some programs may be required to use these measures for accreditation, it may be possible for some programs to find alternatives that assess specific learning behaviors.

8. SLOs by Number of Measures Used for Assessment



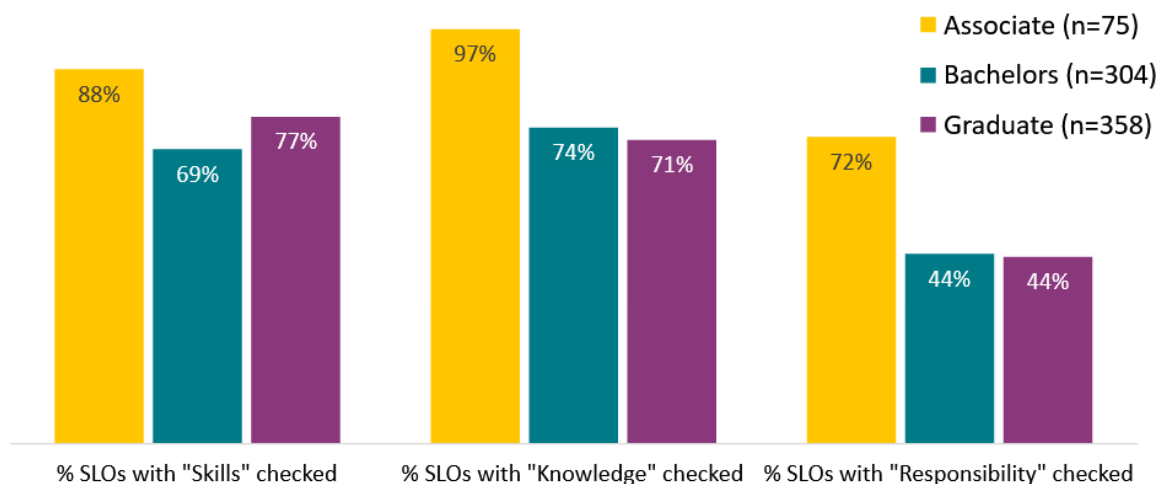
More than half of all programs used multiple measures per SLO, which is ideal for ensuring robust assessment by observing the learning behavior from multiple standpoints.

9. SLO Content Focus Frequency by Category and Degree Type (% = Frequency / Total SLOs)



SLOs covered a variety of content reflecting what instructors believe is important to monitor in student learning. Many of these categories align with UNM’s Learning Goals of students producing diverse skillsets and knowledge bases for advancing in careers and postsecondary learning. Undergraduate programs reported more of a focus on research and inquiry-based learning than graduate programs. Student products or milestones are often being used as measures for outcomes, but they are not suitable as the object of an outcome itself.

10. Program SLOs by UNM Learning Goal and Degree Type



In addition to content areas, SLOs are mapped to UNM’s Learning Goals. Most academic programs report the assessment of both ‘Skills’ and ‘Knowledge,’ with a lower number of SLOs related to ‘Responsibility.’

College, School, and Branch Narrative Themes

Assessment Perceptions:

Colleges, schools, and branches reported changes in response to past assessment cycles, accreditation processes, and academic program reviews. Many changes focused on simplifying, creating, and improving student learning outcomes, measures of learning, and aligning assessment components. Program changes, such as the addition of accelerated online programs, were noted. Some programs also highlighted efforts at increasing faculty participation in their assessment processes.

Assessment Strengths:

The reported program and assessment changes are themselves evidence of continuous improvement success. In addition, virtually all assessment leaders felt that there had been some improvement in assessment over time, and many units highlighted how understanding of assessment and buy-in existed, with CARC committees playing a key role.

Assessment Challenges:

Many units also reported challenges with assessment. Several units cited staffing shortages and turnover as contributing to delays and increased workload, which were also related to decreased assessment participation and buy-in. A few units expressed a need for greater support for their CARC committees from leadership and faculty. Some units also noted small or limited student sample sizes in degree programs as impacting participation and reporting.

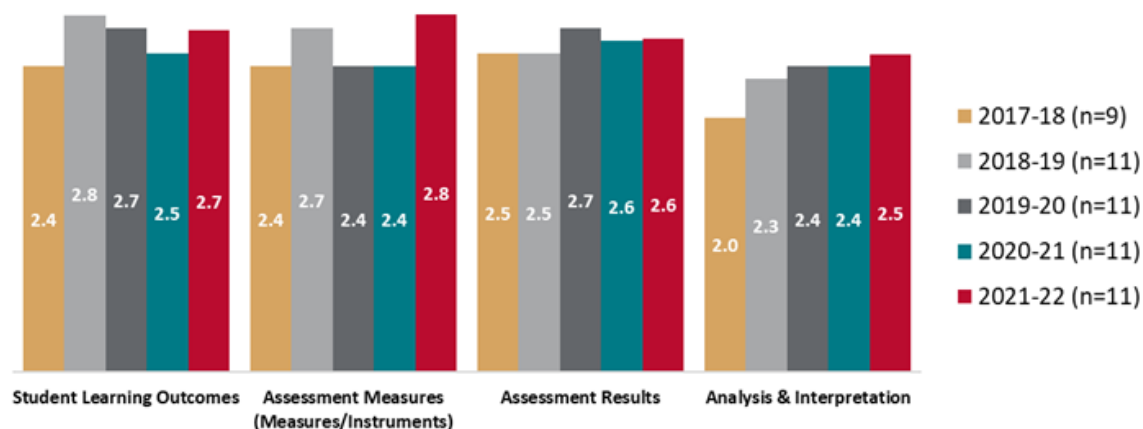
Assessment Support:

Many units expressed positive experiences with support provided by the OAAPR and highlighted workshops and individual consultations as being especially useful. A few units had requests, such as building more support for CARCs and better integrating assessment into curriculum development processes. Such requests highlight the importance of creating a shared assessment culture across units and departments.

Assessment Maturity Rubrics

Maturity rubrics completed by each college, school, and branch help indicate whether aspects of assessment are not present (0), developing (1), emerging (2), or proficient (3). Comparing the average scores of all rubrics year-over-year shows that all self-rating of assessment increased from last year.

11. Average Maturity Rubric Scores 2017-18 to 2021-22



Programs are reporting high efficacy in their assessment tools overall. Analysis and interpretation is the area rated lowest by colleges/schools/branches. More attention needs to be given to the evaluation of assessment data. With these rubrics having a ceiling of 3, it is important to compare overall participation and additional year-over-year improvements with the assessment maturity metric.

OAAPR Assessment Report Feedback

OAAPR staff provided feedback on plans and reports to a sample of programs from each unit (53% of all submissions), and several themes emerged from this review.

Strengths:

- Programs are reporting intended future changes to their programs and/or assessment.
- Faculty are reflecting on their assessment processes, problem solving and improving current processes such as making curriculum adjustments.
- Programs are incorporating additional data collection methods, such as exit or satisfaction surveys.
- Units are using multiple measures to assess the same SLO.
- Programs are integrating formative measures, enabling a better sense of how much learning is due to programs themselves.
- Units are creating new plans and encouraging reporting for programs that have lapsed in assessment.

Challenges:

- Units are providing overly detailed SLOs that included multiple learning behaviors and/or tools listed.
- Units are also providing underdeveloped SLOs that were not specific to their program.
- Assessment is occurring at only one point in a program, which makes it harder to track learning across the program and how much learning is due to the program itself.
- Assessment measurement is based on GPA or course grades, which only indicates overall performance/scores.
- Benchmarks are being saturated with no plans to adjust them or are not being met without any actionable items determined to close this gap.

Conclusion

Overall, assessment at UNM is both improving and has room for improvement. It is hoped that this report will inspire assessment practitioners and help individual programs situate themselves relative to others and to the university as a whole.

Programs at UNM are doing excellent work making changes in response to assessment and other factors and communicating their improvements outward. They are determining where and how teaching and learning succeed for students, staff, and faculty and are acting accordingly. They are assessing students at multiple points in their programs with multiple measures, restarting assessment processes that had lapsed, and showing strong awareness of factors affecting assessment.

Within the assessment process, there are opportunities to increase participation, refine SLOs, move benchmarks up or break them down further, and implement alternatives to grades and GPAs as assessment measures. The OAAPR will continue to provide support in these and other areas and ensure that assessment processes such as the new CARC review forms work for all involved.

In terms of the broader assessment climate, it will be important to increase buy-in and participation in assessment to create a fuller picture of UNM as a whole and to enhance communication with key parties such as leadership. Many colleges, schools, and branches found that staffing capacity and turnover affected their assessment along with other work, making these key issues to address to ensure excellent teaching and learning.

The OAAPR can provide support in these matters, but it cannot address them by itself. A strong assessment environment requires concerted efforts across the university to help tell our stories and improve education for everyone.