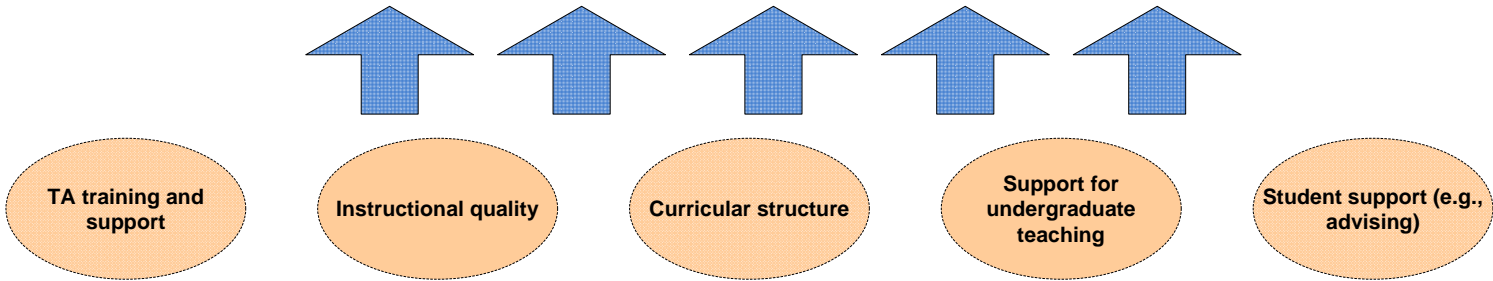
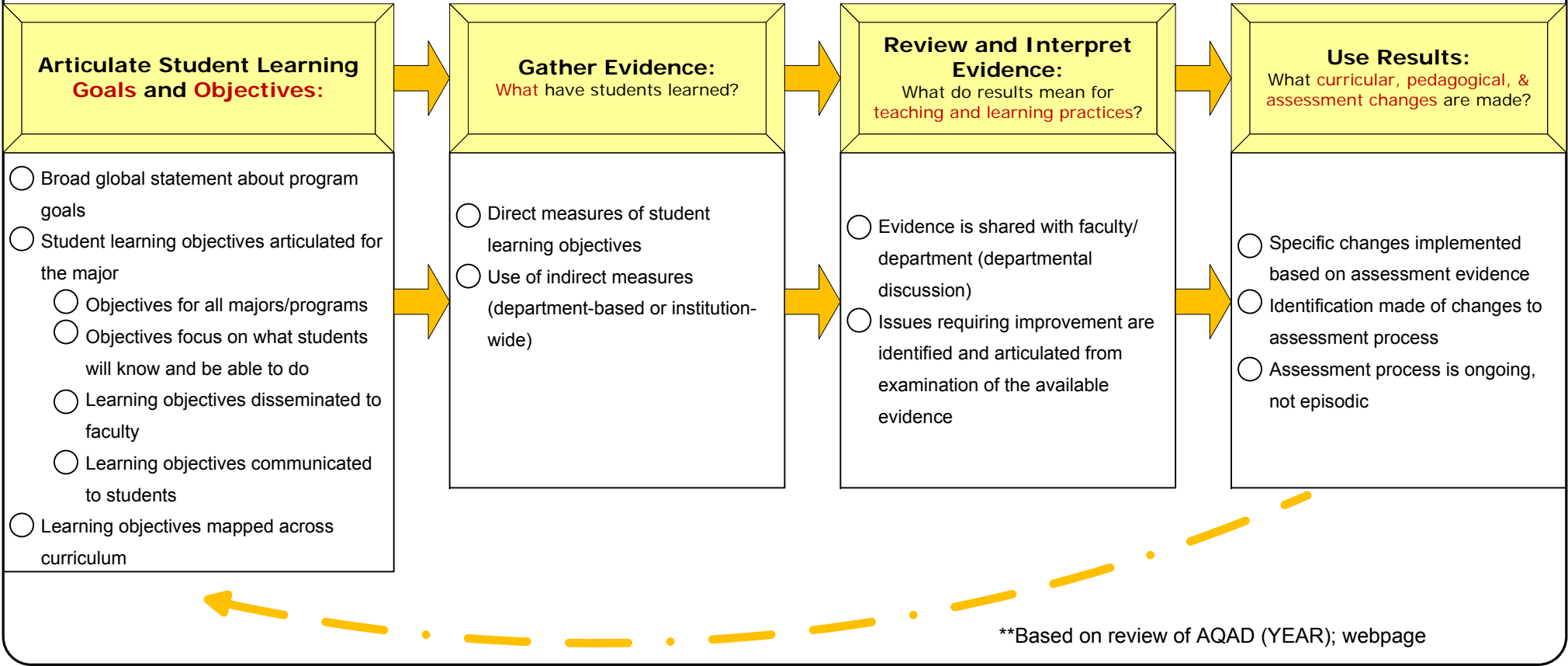


Assessing Student Learning Department of _____ **

Legend

Present

Not Present



A Focus on Student Learning Assessment

The four boxes in the chart identify the essential steps/components of program-based student learning assessment. The +/o symbols in the chart reflect what the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment could ascertain about your department's student learning assessment activities, based on a review of AQAD and other reports for accreditation as well as from departmental web pages.

At the bottom of the chart (in the circles) are other program components that can affect student learning and their experiences more generally. These components can be assessed through departmental or campus-wide assessment methods such as SRTI and the Senior Survey. Departments' AQAD and other self-study documents reveal the use of institution-wide measures for assessing these areas for programmatic improvement. However, since such activities do not directly reflect assessment of program-based **student learning objectives**, they are not the focus of this analysis.

Components of program-based student learning assessment

- Clearly articulated student learning objectives for the major
- Systematic collection and analysis of evidence of student performance across these objectives
 - Use of this evidence in decision-making for programmatic improvement

Student Learning Goals and Objectives

Program goals describe broad learning outcomes and concepts (what you want students to learn) expressed in general terms (e.g., preparation for employment in a related field, clear communication, problem-solving skills, etc.).

Student Learning Objectives are the specific skills, knowledge, and values students in your program should exhibit that reflect the broader program goals (e.g., "students will be able to develop a cogent argument to support a position").

Objectives should:

- use action verbs to describe observable indicators of student achievement
- comprehensively reflect the knowledge, skills, and perspectives of the discipline
- be designed by and disseminated to faculty
- be communicated to students

There are three types of student learning objectives:

1. Cognitive: "What knowledge and thinking skills do you want your graduates to have?"
2. Affective: "What do you want your graduates to value or care about?"
3. Behavioral: "What do you want your graduates to be able to do?"

Gathering Evidence: Assessment Tools

Direct assessment

- Direct assessment uses evidence of actual student work (in papers, exams, capstone projects, etc.) to assess student performance on specific learning objectives.
- Direct assessment is distinct from traditional or holistic grading, because it generates evidence of student achievement on specific learning objectives.
- Evidence from these methods can make a compelling case in telling others the story of what your program's graduates demonstrate they are able to do.

Indirect assessment

- Indirect methods capture students', alumni, and employers' perceptions of student learning/performance. Information on students' post-graduation plans (e.g., job placement, graduate school) also serve as indirect measures.
- Tools for indirect assessment include such things as exit interviews, job placement rates, surveys, and other self-reporting of achievement.
- Results of indirect methods serve as a complement to the results of direct methods, but are in themselves not a substitute for the evidence of described above.

For more information on program-based assessment, see http://www.umass.edu/oapa/oapa/publications/online_handbooks/program_based.pdf