

Bryn Mawr College

Educational Effectiveness

Assessment Handbook

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Questions/information/suggestions:
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This digital handbook is designed to orient Bryn Mawr faculty members and other Bryn Mawr community stakeholders to the College's system for assessing educational effectiveness. It is divided into six brief sections:

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1. The Why:

Why do we assess?

Bryn Mawr's mission is centered on academic excellence. We believe that our community of world-class teacher-scholars, working closely with students in a small liberal-arts learning community, equips our students with the skills, experiences, and perspectives for lives of success and purpose.

Educational assessment is the systematic documentation and analysis of empirical data on students' knowledge, skills, and aptitude to gauge their learning and refine the educational experiences we offer them. Faculty evaluate how well and to what degree their students are learning; the College collects and analyzes the data; and departments, the general faculty, and the Provost collectively use insights from the results to refine our work over time.

We conduct assessment because it is an essential tool to ensure and demonstrate that we are fulfilling our mission of academic excellence. Assessment aids us in the continual pursuit of excellence, and helps faculty and departments investigate, test out, and gauge the effectiveness of curricular changes and innovations.

Empirical assessment that produces both qualitative and quantitative data has increasingly become a norm across higher education, and is expected or required by funders, accreditation entities, and myriad stakeholders within and beyond campus communities. College-wide assessment data is just one of many methods Bryn Mawr uses to measure effectiveness and spur innovation. But it is an essential method, and Bryn Mawr has worked intently to institutionalize it and nurture a culture of assessment across the College.

2. The Who:

Who is responsible for assessment?

The Institutional Assessment Committee, or IAC, maintains the overall assessment system. In consultation with the faculty and the Provost, the IAC formulates and revises assessment procedures, sets assessment schedules, provides information and technical support to the faculty, collects, analyzes, and communicates assessment data, and when appropriate makes recommendations to the Provost and faculty.

Institutional Assessment Committee Membership

<i>Entity</i>	Provost's Office	The Faculty	President's Office	Inst. Research, Planning, & Assessment	Library and IT Services (LITS)
<i>Members</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provost • Associate Provost of Assessment (Co-chair of IAC) • Special Assistant to Provost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair, Curriculum Committee • Chair, Committee on Academic Priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief of Staff and Secretary of the College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exec. Dir. of Institutional Effectiveness, Planning and Assessment (Co-chair of IAC) • Director of Inst. Research, Planning and Assessment • Enrollment and Institutional Research Analyst 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Assessment, Learning Spaces, Special Projects • Director, Library Research and Instructional Svcs. • Social Sci. and Data Librarian

The faculty provides input and feedback to the Provost and IAC as the faculty sees fit, and as always retains the prerogative to approve, reject, or modify assessment-related recommendations that affect curriculum, academic requirements, and any other area over which the faculty have authority as specified in Bryn Mawr's Plan of Governance. Assessment data also is a tool available to the faculty Curriculum Committee ("Curriculum") and Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP) as they make curricular and staffing decisions and recommendations, similar to how these committees make use of external reviews of departments and programs.

Department chairs and program directors work with the IAC to select courses and rubrics for assessment each year. Chairs and directors also provide Curriculum, CAP, and the Provost with annual reflections on assessment results (see Section 5, The What Next), again not unlike the way departments and programs reflect and act on the results of external reviews.

Individual faculty members evaluate the work of students in certain courses and advising situations. The faculty members provide the evaluation information to the IAC through simple online forms (see Section 3, The What, and Section 4, The How).

As a faculty member, you will be asked to conduct assessment of your students' achievement if:

1. You are teaching an Approaches to Inquiry course that has been selected for assessment; *or*
2. You are an instructor or advisor for students completing senior capstone projects.

The next section (Section 3, "The What") explains more about these courses and their role in Bryn Mawr's assessment system.

The frameworks and procedures in the rest of this handbook – what we assess, how we assess, how we make use of results, and on what schedule – have been crafted and informed through cooperation and dialogue among the IAC, department chairs and program directors, and individual faculty members. The choices made have been intentional, deliberative, community choices, informed by our mission and values, and open to future revision by the community.

3. The What:

What is assessment, and what do we assess?

Educational assessment is the systematic documentation and analysis of empirical data on students' knowledge, skills, and aptitude to gauge their learning and refine the educational experiences we offer them. More plainly, faculty evaluate how well and to what degree their students are learning; the College collects and analyzes the data; and departments, the faculty, and the Provost collectively use insights from the results to refine our work over time.

Bryn Mawr assesses educational effectiveness in two main areas:

1. **General education:** introductory or survey courses that are part of students' broad liberal arts educational experience;
2. **Program education:** advanced, field-specific work in which students apply key skills in the pursuit of personalized research and study agendas.

1. General Education Assessment: Approaches to Inquiry Courses

General education is the education students receive prior to, in preparation for, and/or outside the bounds of coursework for their declared major. It is the broad, multidisciplinary work of a liberal arts education, which exposes students to multiple methods, perspectives, and tools.

Bryn Mawr assesses general education through courses that fulfill our distribution requirements, which are called Approaches to Inquiry. Formulated by the faculty in 2012 as a replacement for prior, more conventional requirements, the Approaches to Inquiry represent key modes of academic endeavor and knowledge production in which all liberal-arts students should engage, regardless of their eventual major field. The Approaches to Inquiry are:

- **Critical Interpretation (CI):** critically interpreting works, such as texts, objects, artistic creations and performances, through a process of close-reading.
- **Cross-Cultural Analysis (CC):** analyzing the variety of societal systems and patterns of behavior across space.
- **Inquiry into the Past (IP):** inquiring into the development and transformation of human experience over time.
- **Scientific Investigation (SI):** understanding the natural world by testing hypotheses against observational evidence.

Faculty and their departments or programs may designate courses as fulfilling one or more Approaches to Inquiry (AI) requirements if they feel the course in question engages deeply and consistently with the given approach or approaches. In any given year, about half of Bryn Mawr's offerings are AI-designated courses.

The College's goal is to assess two 100-level AI courses in each of the College's 25 degree-granting undergraduate departments and programs each year. Such courses may be exempted and/or substituted with a 200-level course if:

- The department or program offers fewer than two 100-level AI courses with enrollment of 10 or more students;
- A new or interim faculty member is teaching the AI course and the department or program requests that the faculty member not be required to conduct assessment;
- The department or program strongly wishes to assess a particular learning goal or Approach to Inquiry, and it effectively makes the case that it cannot meaningfully conduct that assessment through any of its 100-level courses being offered that year.

Each year the IAC works cooperatively with chairs and directors to select AI courses for assessment.

2. Program Education Assessment: the Senior Capstone

Program assessment gives departments and programs the opportunity to evaluate how the department or program's curriculum, instruction, course offerings, and experiences are facilitating and impacting student learning. In particular, program education assessment measures educational outcomes in students' later undergraduate years, when they bring their knowledge and skills to bear on original research, study, or practice. For this reason, Bryn Mawr assesses program education using the senior capstone experience. The capstone varies across departments and programs but generally consists of a significant research thesis, independent project, or critically documented experience.

The balance of structured class sessions, group meetings and check-ins, and individual advising varies across departments and programs, but all capstones take place under the aegis of an advanced 300-level course designation. The faculty instructor or instructors of those courses assess the capstone project of each student enrolled in the course. In departments or programs where additional faculty members might serve as advisors or secondary advisors to students working on capstone projects, the instructors of record have the responsibility and discretion to coordinate the work of assessment in a way that makes the most sense for the situation.

4. The How:

How do we conduct assessment?

The core work of the assessment of student learning is similar to what Bryn Mawr faculty do when examining student work at the end of a semester: the faculty member uses their experience and professional judgment to evaluate the student’s achievement in the course, relative to a set of professionally appropriate goals or standards relevant to the approaches and skills being assessed.

In Bryn Mawr’s assessment system, faculty evaluate student achievement by rating one or more pieces of student work. The faculty member rates the work according to a **rubric**, which is simply a framework for evaluation. Bryn Mawr’s general education and program education assessment rubrics both contain a handful of **elements**: individual learning goals within the framework. Faculty members rate students’ work on a **scale** of 1-4 for each element.

This section of the handbook covers the nuts and bolts of assessment data collection and submission. For this reason, it is the longest section, and for clarity and convenience is divided into subsections.

1. General Education – Approaches to Inquiry Courses

1. a. What Work to Assess:

The faculty member may choose the work to assess: an essay, a research paper, an experiment, a presentation or exhibition, and so on.

1.b. What Rubric to Use:

Here is Bryn Mawr’s general-education rubric, developed by the IAC in consultation with the faculty. It is used across all Approaches to Inquiry courses that are selected for assessment:

Approaches to Inquiry Rubric

	Level 1 (Does <i>not</i> meet expectations) Student shows <i>no/limited</i> ability to...	Level 2 (<i>Begins</i> to meet expectations) Student shows <i>some</i> ability to...	Level 3 (<i>Meets</i> expectations) Student shows <i>good</i> ability to...	Level 4 (<i>Exceeds</i> expectations) Student shows <i>exceptional</i> ability to...
Pose Meaningful Questions	... express topic/issue/ question/problem informed by existing knowledge relevant to the field			
Find Evidence	... recognize an item/ source/observation as relevant evidence.			
Interpretation/Analysis	... draw insights based on the analysis of relevant data/evidence using the appropriate methodology.			
Report/Communication	... communicate clearly using the scholarly and stylistic conventions of the discipline.			

If a faculty member were assessing a student’s essay, for example, and the student had in the faculty member’s judgment made *some* use of evidence from a source but also missed opportunities to include other important evidence, then the faculty member would give the student a rating of 2 for the “Find Evidence” element of the rubric. If this example seems obvious, that’s a good thing: the rubrics are designed to avoid ambiguity so that faculty can feel confident that they are assigning ratings based on an objective evaluation of the work.

Also note that the rubric elements use multiple terms: “topic/issue/question/problem,” “item/source/observation,” “Report/communication,” and so on. This feature is intended to provide maximum flexibility and respect for different pedagogical approaches, assignment types, and disciplinary conventions.

Finally, the highest level of the 1-4 rating scale is “Exceeds expectations,” which is designed to help prevent “rating inflation” while allowing for the recognition of exceptional levels of achievement even within the generally high level of achievement of Bryn Mawr students.

1.c. How to Report and Submit General-education Assessment Data:

Each instructor participating in general education assessment will receive a web link that will take them to an online Qualtrics survey form. The instructor enters a 1-4 rating for each rubric element for each student into the form, along with brief answers to a handful of basic informational questions.

Here is an example of what the data from a course looks like once it has been submitted and automatically becomes part of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment’s database:

Question	Answer 1
Recipient Last Name	[REDACTED]
Recipient First Name	[REDACTED]
Which mode of inquiry are you assessing?	Scientific Investigation (SI): understanding the natural world by testing hypotheses
From the menu below, please choose the department listed for this course.	Biology
What is the course being assessed?	[REDACTED]
Using the following rubric components, please assess -Student 1 - Pose Real Questi	Level 3 (Meets expectations). The student shows good ability to express topic/issu
Using the following rubric components, please assess -Student 1 - Find Evidence	Level 3 (Meets expectations). The student shows good ability to recognize an item,
Using the following rubric components, please assess -Student 1 - Interpretation/A	Level 2 (Beginning to meet expectations). The student shows some ability to draw
Using the following rubric components, please assess -Student 1 - Report/Communica	Level 2 (Beginning to meet expectations). The student shows some ability to comm
Using the following rubric components, please assess -Student 2 - Pose Real Questions	Level 3 (Meets expectations). The student shows good ability to express topic/issu
Using the following rubric components, please assess -Student 2 - Find Evidence	Level 4 (Exceeds expectations). The student shows exceptional ability to recognize
Using the following rubric components, please assess -Student 2 - Interpretation/Anal	Level 4 (Exceeds expectations). The student shows exceptional ability to draw insig
Using the following rubric components, please assess -Student 2 - Report/Communicatio	Level 3 (Meets expectations). The student shows good ability to communicate clea
Using the following rubric components, please assess -Student 3 - Pose Real Qu	Level 3 (Meets expectations). The student shows good ability to express topic/issu
Using the following rubric components, please assess -Student 3 - Find Evidenc	Level 3 (Meets expectations). The student shows good ability to recognize an item,
Using the following rubric components, please assess -Student 3 - Interpretati	Level 2 (Beginning to meet expectations). The student shows some ability to draw
Using the following rubric components, please assess -Student 3 - Report/Communi	Level 2 (Beginning to meet expectations). The student shows some ability to comm
Using the following rubric components, please assess -Student 4 - Pose Real Ques	The student did not take this course
Using the following rubric components, please assess -Student 4 - Find Evidence	The student did not take this course
Using the following rubric components, please assess -Student 4 - Interpretation	The student did not take this course
Using the following rubric components, please assess -Student 4 - Report/Communi	The student did not take this course
Using the following rubric components, please assess -Student 5 - Pose Real Que	Level 2 (Beginning to meet expectations). The student shows some ability to expre

2. Program Education – Senior Capstone

2.a. What Work to Assess:

For purposes of program education through the capstone experience, the work assessed is the capstone project itself.

2.b. What Rubrics to Use:

Program assessment is more comprehensive than general education assessment. For this reason, the selection and content of Bryn Mawr’s program assessment rubrics are necessarily a bit more comprehensive as well.

Each year, faculty conducting program assessment use **two** rubrics: one selected by the IAC and the faculty for all departments, and one selected by each individual department.

The more detailed explanation is as follows. Starting in the mid-2010s, Bryn Mawr developed a set of College-wide learning goals, which are now known as the Goals of a Bryn Mawr Education. These learning goals are writing skills; research skills; oral communication skills; ability to understand and use quantitative tools; ability to view a problem from multiple perspectives; critical thinking skills; and problem-solving abilities.

Bryn Mawr developed these goals independently of, but over a period of years concurrent with, the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ (AACU) development of its VALUE rubric system.¹ The AACU rubrics are detailed, proven, nationally known and adopted assessment tools, and six of them correlate quite closely to Bryn Mawr’s learning goals. For these reasons, **Bryn Mawr employs these six AACU rubrics for program education assessment.** This enables us to evaluate educational effectiveness with reference to our own mission-driven standards for academic excellence, and to other institutions and nationwide standards and data.

The AACU rubrics we use are:

1. Written Communication
2. Inquiry and Analysis
3. Oral Communication
4. Quantitative Literacy
5. Critical Thinking
6. Problem Solving

Most of the AACU rubrics map one-to-one with the corresponding Bryn Mawr learning goal, for example “written communication” to “writing skills.” The exception is the AACU “inquiry and analysis” rubric, which encompasses Bryn Mawr’s learning goals of “research skills” and “ability to view problems from multiple perspectives.”

¹ The AACU is a nationally recognized, international membership organization dedicated to promoting equity, innovation, and excellence in liberal education.

Like Bryn Mawr’s general education assessment rubric, the AACU rubrics each contain multiple elements, and use a 1-4 rating scale. Undergraduate degree-granting departments and programs assess senior capstone projects annually, using two of the six AACU rubrics: one common to all programs, selected by the IAC in consultation with the faculty; and one of each department or program’s choosing. For example, in 2021 the College-wide assessment rubric was Critical Thinking, while departments and programs chose various secondary assessment rubrics from among the other five AACU rubrics. This approach enables College-wide analysis of assessment results for one rubric each year, while allowing departments and programs to assess additional learning outcomes based on their own priorities. The common rubric changes annually, cycling through all six rubrics.

Here is a slightly abridged version of the Critical Thinking rubric:

AACU Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric

	Capstone 4	Milestone 3	Milestone 2	Benchmark 1
Explanation of Issues	Issue/problem ... is stated clearly, described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	... is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	... is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, ... and/or backgrounds unknown.	... is stated without clarification or description.
Evidence	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.	... with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.	... with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.	... without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.
Influence of context and assumptions	Thoroughly ... analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.
Student's position (perspective/hypothesis/thesis)	Specific position ... is imaginative, taking into account ... complexities of an issue. Limits of position ... are acknowledged. takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are acknowledged within position.	... acknowledges different sides of an issue.	... is stated, but is simplistic and obvious.
Conclusions and related outcomes	Conclusions ... are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.	Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes ... are identified clearly.	... is logically tied to information ...; some related outcomes ... are identified clearly.	... is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes ... are oversimplified.

While the College was developing learning goals and creating this educational assessment system, it also encouraged departments and programs to formulate their own learning goals, tailored to their fields but clearly connected to the College-wide Goals of a Bryn Mawr Education. Since 2021, every undergraduate degree-granting department and program has been required to formulate learning goals and publish them on its web site.

Because each department's and program's learning goals are keyed to the Bryn Mawr learning goals, and because the AACU rubric elements are detailed and specific, departments and programs can use the AACU rubrics to assess their field-specific learning goals. In summary, the clear link between departmental learning goals and the AACU rubrics enables effective program education assessment.

For example, the Mathematics department has formulated 11 learning goals, each closely correlated with one or two of the Bryn Mawr learning goals, and therefore with one or two of the AACU rubrics we use. In 2021, Mathematics assessed senior capstone projects using the AACU Critical Thinking rubric and the Mathematics department's chosen secondary AACU rubric (Oral Communication). This assessment process allowed Mathematics to collect meaningful and insight into more than half of its departmental learning goals in a single year.

2.c. How to Report and Submit Program Assessment Data:

Each instructor participating in program education assessment will receive a web link that will take them to an online Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet contains a tab (aka sheet) of instructions; a tab with the primary, College-wide rubric; and multiple other tabs from which the faculty member can select the secondary rubric that their department or program has chosen that year. A line is automatically filled in for each student, and the instructor enters a 1-4 rating for each rubric element for each student. The instructor repeats the process for their department or program's chosen secondary rubric. Finally, the instructor can provide qualitative feedback about the assessment process in another tab.

The data and information are automatically synchronized with the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning's database as they are entered, so there is no need to click Submit or manually send the data to anyone.

Here are examples of the instructions tab and a filled-out assessment tab (again from 2021, when Critical Thinking was the College-wide assessment rubric):

5. The What's Next:

How are assessment results used?

Assessment results, along with analysis of the results by the IAC, are made available to the Bryn Mawr community annually, with a special focus on communicating results to the faculty. The results and analysis are used most directly by five community stakeholder groups:

- **Individual faculty members**, who might wish to reflect on their students' achievement and compare the data with data from other courses, departments, and/or years;
- **Departments, programs, chairs, and directors**, who will use the results to craft required assessment reflections and, when warranted, to support curricular refinement and requests for curricular or staffing changes;
- **The faculty, particularly the Curriculum Committee and Committee on Academic Priorities**, who will incorporate assessment results into their overall consideration of curricular and staffing requests;
- **The Provost**, who receives departments' assessment reflections, works with faculty members and committees to close the loop and formulate changes or refinements based on assessment results, and factors assessment data into support of curricular planning and development, and resource decision-making; *and*
- **The IAC**, which uses assessment results to evaluate assessment processes and, optionally, make recommendations to the Provost and faculty based on assessment data and trends.

The guiding purpose of the assessment process is to use assessment results to discover, confirm, and/or highlight areas of strength and areas in need of refinement or innovation. Assessment results will factor into resource and staffing decisions.

At the same time, assessment results are not used to evaluate individual faculty members' teaching or to dictate course content. Bryn Mawr remains dedicated to the liberal-arts educational model, to shared governance, to faculty autonomy and academic freedom, and to curricula and teaching methods tailored to the needs of our students. Educational assessment at Bryn Mawr helps us measure the degree to which our students are attaining the educational goals and outcomes that we have collectively decided are important.

6. The When:

What are the timelines and deadlines?

The annual educational assessment calendar is based on the academic year: it begins in September and ends the following May.² Departments and programs undergoing external review in a given year may be exempted from participating in that year's assessment activity.

During the second half of each semester, **the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, and Assessment** reminds department chairs and program directors about upcoming assessments. Soon after, **department chairs and program directors** reach out to faculty members teaching courses selected for assessment and ask them to record and submit assessment data. At the end of the semester, those **individual faculty members** submit the assessment data.

During the fall semester, **the IAC** analyzes the prior academic year's data and reports on the results to the faculty and other stakeholders.

Later in the fall semester, **department chairs and program directors** create assessment reflections and make them available to the Provost, the IAC, the Curriculum Committee, and the Committee on Academic Priorities.

During the normal course of their review of curricular and staffing requests, **the Curriculum Committee and the Committee on Academic Priorities** review assessment data and factor it into their decisions and recommendations.

In the second half of the spring semester, **department chairs and program directors** work with the IAC to select Approaches to Inquiry courses in which general-education assessment will be conducted during the next academic year.

Every three years during the fall semester, **the IAC** makes recommendations to the Provost and the faculty for revising assessment procedures, with the intent that formal decisions about those recommendations will be made by the spring, in time for the beginning of the next annual assessment cycle in the following fall semester.

Here is the full assessment calendar, followed by simplified calendars for individual faculty members and department chairs and program directors:

² As of the March 2023 publication of this handbook, the College is engaged in a three-semester assessment cycle, to transition from the 2021 calendar-year assessment cycle into an academic-year cycle moving forward.

The Assessment Calendar: Timelines and Deadlines

Sep-Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IAC analyzes prior year assessment data, flags issues to monitor • Every three years, IAC initiates review of assessment processes
Oct-Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IAC communicates prior year assessment results to faculty and BMC community • Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Assessment, and Planning reminds dept chairs and program directors about assessment
Nov-Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairs and directors ask faculty members teaching courses selected for assessment to conduct the assessment • Chairs and directors create and submit formal assessment reflections to Provost, IAC, Curriculum, and CAP
Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IAC makes recommendations to Provost and faculty based on prior year assessment results and programs' reflections • Provost's office works with appropriate faculty chairs, directors, and committees to close the loop and address issues and opportunities that arise from assessment results • Faculty members teaching fall courses record and submit assessment data • Every three years, IAC makes recommendations to Provost and faculty about changes to assessment processes
Feb-May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum, CAP, Faculty, and Provost incorporate assessment results into resource and staffing decisions, per their respective roles • Faculty considers any IAC recommendations for curricular change that require approval of the general faculty • Every three years, faculty considers IAC recommendations for changes to assessment processes
Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Assessment, and Planning reminds dept chairs and program directors about assessment
Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairs and directors ask faculty members teaching courses selected for assessment to conduct the assessment
Apr-May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty teaching fall courses collect and submit current year assessment data

Simplified Calendar: Individual Faculty Member

Sep-Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty teaching fall courses decide which student work to assess
Oct-Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IAC communicates prior year assessment results to faculty
Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty teaching fall courses collect and submit assessment data
Jan-Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty teaching spring courses decide which student work to assess
Apr-May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty teaching spring courses collect and submit assessment data

Simplified Calendar: Department Chair/Program Director

Oct-Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IAC communicates prior year assessment results to chairs and directors
Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Assessment, and Planning reminds dept chairs and program directors about assessment • Chairs and directors ask faculty members teaching courses selected for assessment to conduct the assessment
Nov-Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairs and directors create and submit formal assessment reflections to Provost, IAC, Curriculum, and CAP
Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Assessment, and Planning reminds chairs and directors about assessment
Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairs and directors ask faculty members teaching courses selected for assessment to conduct the assessment
Mar-May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairs and directors work with IAC to select Approaches to Inquiry courses for assessment during next academic year

Bryn Mawr College

Educational Effectiveness Assessment

FAQ

1. What is educational assessment?

Educational assessment is the **systematic documentation and analysis of empirical data** on students' knowledge and skills so that faculty, members, departments and programs, and the College can gauge their learning and refine the educational experiences we offer them, and the **use of results** to strengthen our educational effectiveness. More info: [LINK]

2. Why do we do it?

Bryn Mawr's mission is centered on academic excellence. **Educational assessment is a key tool to help us ensure that we are fulfilling our mission**, and to aid us in the continual pursuit of excellence. Educational assessment helps departments and programs investigate, test out, and gauge the effectiveness of curricular changes and innovations, and make changes or refinements as needed. More info: [LINK]

3. Is assessment used to critique my individual pedagogy or dictate to my colleagues and I what we can and cannot teach?

No. Bryn Mawr remains dedicated to the liberal-arts model, shared governance, faculty autonomy, and academic freedom. Educational assessment helps measure the degree to which our students are **attaining the educational goals and outcomes that we as an academic community have already collectively decided are important**. Faculty members will not be dictated to from "on high," but departments and programs are expected to use assessment results to "close the loop" – to make changes and refinements that they feel will maximize students' educational outcomes. Info on the Goals of a Bryn Mawr Education, which form the basis of our assessment system: [LINK]. More info on how assessment data is used: [LINK].

4. How can a single number and a one-size-fits-all system capture all the important work we do as teachers, advisors, and mentors?

It can't – and it's not meant to. That's why Bryn Mawr's assessment system does not work that way. **Students learning is evaluated using rubrics that are broad and flexible**, applicable to the myriad fields in which Bryn Mawr faculty teach. Student achievement in a given course is evaluated by the faculty member teaching that course. As a faculty member, you assess student learning by asking, "Does my chosen assignment provide sufficient evidence of the degree to which students are learning?" More info on what student work faculty members assess: [LINK].

5. As a faculty member, how do I know if I have to conduct assessment in my course?

Generally speaking, instructors of 100-level Approaches to Inquiry courses, and instructors/advisors of Senior Capstone experiences participate in the assessment process. Each department chair and program director will notify faculty each semester if their course will be

included in the assessment pool. Faculty might also be contacted by the IAC. More info on who does assessment: [LINK]. More info on which courses are assessed: [LINK].

6. As a faculty member, what do I actually have to do, and when?

For the course or capstone experience you are assessing, **you rate each student on a numerical scale**, reflecting their proficiency or progress towards each learning outcome in a rubric. You enter these ratings in an easy-to-use online form. More info on this assessment data-collection process: [LINK]. More info on the assessment calendar and timelines: [LINK].

7. If I am a department/program chair, what do I have to do, and when?

Each year, you are asked to do three main things:

1. **Choose which general-education courses** in your department or program will conduct assessment. More info click here [LINK]
2. **Choose the assessment rubric** your department or program will use to assess program education, in addition to the primary rubric used by all departments. More info here: [LINK]
3. **Work with your departmental or program colleagues to craft an assessment reflection** and, if applicable, suggestions for refinements or changes based on assessment results, and submit this information to the Provost, IAC, Curriculum Committee and Committee on Academic Priorities. More info here: [LINK]