TracDat Glossary

This glossary of terms was created to aid those working with the assessment software tool TracDat. It is organized by the order in which one will see the information listed in the tabs contained within the software. The first section entitled Overall Terms, defines the terms Institution, Units, Reporting Units and Assessment Units. The second section is geared toward the set up of the Reporting Unit and the third section is geared toward the set up of the Assessment Unit.

Section 1:
Overall Terms

Institution: Western Michigan University is defined as the Institution in TracDat. Goals can be defined for Western and then Reporting Units and Assessment Units can tie their goals and assessments to the goals of the Institution.

Unit: A department, college, or institution where assessment takes place. The unit can be defined as either an Assessment Unit or a Reporting Unit.

Unit Type: The type of unit, either a Reporting Unit or an Assessment Unit.

Section 2:
Reporting Unit

Home Tab: This tab contains summary information about the Reporting Unit including a My Assignments, Goals summary and Assessment Units Summary for a quick at-a-glance review. There is also a calendaring feature and Profile of the user available here.

Reporting Unit Tab:

What is a Reporting Unit: The Reporting Unit can be defined as the area that Assessment Units are associated with and the goals of the Assessment Units can be linked to the goals of the Reporting Unit.
**For example, the College of Arts and Sciences is a Reporting Unit. Assessments can be done at this higher level and goals created for the college. Then Biological Sciences as an Assessment Unit, can associate its assessment plan and goals and tie them back up to the Reporting Unit's goals and assessments.
Underneath this tab, you can view the goals of the Reporting Unit and the Personnel list.

Goals: Goals are the documentation of the intended achievements for the Assessment Unit. Typically goals do not change very often. You can relate each Goal to other Goals at your Institution. When you add a new Goal or edit an existing Goal, you will see a list of available Goals which you can relate.

Goal Types: Typically the goal type will be student learning but other goal types can be chosen. Goal Types can be used to group like Goals together. This is not required but may be helpful when running reports if you only wish to see those Goals of a certain type.

Personnel: Anyone who participates in gathering data or information pertaining to the assessment plan can be set up as a member of the Personnel for that Reporting Unit. This person can then be given the task of reporting information such as attaching documents pertaining to assessment results, entering findings, etc. and they do not have to have an account in TracDat. Email can be sent to anyone from the Personnel list to request that information be attached or entered into TracDat. The email will be sent to the chosen Personnel with a link for them to be able to enter data or findings and attach documents and this information will be included into TracDat and added to the appropriate area within TracDat. To add new Personnel or to update the Personnel list, please contact the system administrator.

Findings Tab: Findings can be added here to associate with the goals of the Reporting Unit. These may be linked to findings based on several Assessment Units that link back up to the Reporting Unit's goals.

Data Tools Tab: The Data Tools tab can be used to create measures that can be used to identify and collect data that supports one or more outcomes. First create a measure to outline the data to be collected. Groups can then be created that use the measure. For more information, please contact the system administrator.

Measures: A Measure can be used to identify and collect data that supports one or more outcomes. Create a measure to outline the data to be collected.

Groups: Groups can then be created that use the measure. (i.e. specific groups of students etc.)

Questionnaires: Under the Data Tools tab, Questionnaires can be created to gather data from students for assessment purposes. For more information, please contact the system administrator.

Reports Tab: This tab displays multiple reports that can be run with a description of the data that will be pulled from running the report.

Documents Tab: Documents that pertain to the Reporting Unit, Assessment Unit or assessment plan in general can be stored here and shared with other Reporting Units or Assessment Units or Institution-wide. Folders can be created to organize the documents.

Section 3:
Assessment Unit

Home Tab: This tab contains summary information about the Assessment Unit including a My Assignments, Overdue Unit Assignments, Plan Summary, Findings Summary, Goals Summary, and Course Assessment Plan Summary for a quick at-a-glance review. There is also a calendaring feature and Profile of the user available here. Under the Profile link, this is where you can change your password if needed.

Assessment Unit Tab: Under this tab you can enter a mission and vision statement for the Assessment Unit, Goals can be associated with the Assessment Unit, the Personnel list can be accessed and the courses associated with the Assessment Unit can be viewed. To add or update the course list, please contact the system administrator.

What is an Assessment Unit? The Assessment Unit is the primary Unit where assessment takes place. An Assessment Unit is that Unit which has a plan and is being asked to document the results/status of that plan. This form allows you to collect general information about the Assessment Unit. You may add custom fields to this form if you wish to collect additional data. Please contact the system administrator if you wish to add any custom fields.

Goals: Goals are the documentation of the intended achievements for the Assessment Unit. Typically goals do not change very often. You can relate each Goal to other Goals at your Institution. When you add a new Goal or edit an existing Goal, you will see a list of available Goals which you can relate.

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Plan Tab: The Plan tab is where all data regarding the assessment plan is stored. Under this tab you will enter all Outcomes, choose and enter the Means of Assessment, associate Related Courses to the Outcomes, create Tasks and attach Related Goals to the Goals of the Assessment Unit.

What are Outcomes? These are the intended student learning outcomes from your assessment plan.

Tracks: These are typically the degree options or programs within the department. This section is used to indicate when an outcome applies to majors in one area but not to the majors in another, or to graduate students but not undergraduate students. For example, a department may have an outcome for graduate students addressing their understanding of research methodology, while undergraduates have an outcome addressing their ability to apply the findings of research. Some departments have written their assessment plans to include all majors in all outcomes and may therefore simply indicate "all" under this heading.

Outcome Status:

-Is the outcome still being measured? Then choose "Open".

-If the outcome is no longer being measured choose "Complete".

-If the outcome is no longer being looked at, choose "Inactive."

Start Date and End Date: Dates can be entered when entering a new outcome if the desired outcome will only be measured during a specific time frame. Otherwise, these fields can be left empty.

Means of Assessment:

This section addresses the ways in which you will find out whether your students are meeting the intended learning outcomes. Each outcome will have one or more methods for determining student achievement of the intended outcome.

Assessment Method Category: Choose the type of assessment method that you will be attaching to the outcome. i.e. Exam licensure, Course-embedded Measure, etc.

Assessment Method: This is the specific method for collecting data addressing the outcome. It may include surveys, test results, portfolio assessments, targeted assignments in required courses, etc. The assessment plan you developed should have indicated the methods for each outcome.

Criterion: The criteria should indicate how well your students must perform in order for you to determine that they have achieved the intended outcome. Often, this is indicated by a "cut off" score on a test, a percentage of respondents who indicated satisfaction, a level of proficiency required for moving forward in a program, or some other indicator of satisfactory performance. Remember that the assessment plan does not address individual students, but rather the overall performance of candidates in your program. A criterion for a licensure test, for example, might be "80% of the candidates in our program met or exceeded the cut score on the licensure exam in their first attempt."

Schedule: This should answer the question "How often (or when) will you assess the candidates in your program using the indicated method?" If you receive the results from a licensure test once a year, your schedule will be based on that annual report. If you are using performance evaluations from internships that occur over the summer, you will indicate that schedule.

Please note: Under the Means of Assessment, you can assign data gathering or entering information about certain assessment methods by clicking on the assign button at the bottom of the screen. You can also relate relevant documents to the assessment method here as well (i.e. syllabus etc.)

Related Courses: This is a course list to associate related courses to specific outcomes.

Tasks: Use this form to identify those Tasks that must be accomplished in order to achieve the Outcome. When you enter a Task, you can then assign that Task to a person. That person will receive an email notifying them they have been assigned the Task.

Related Goals: You can associate Assessment Unit goals, Reporting Units goals or Institutional Goals with the outcomes of the Assessment Unit here.

Findings Tab:

This section describes the "findings" indicating the results of assessment and how the data are being used to make decisions about program improvements. For each finding, indicate whether the Finding Type and the Finding Status. Provide information about any actions implemented to address limitations and any follow-up information to the proposed action.

Finding: This should include the results of the assessment and the judgment of the faculty regarding student performance. If the licensure test results show that only 70% of your candidates reached the cut score, you would state those results and indicate that the faculty see these results as criterion not met, based on the criterion of 80%.

Finding date: The "date" simply shows when your assessment committee examined the results.

Finding Type: Either "Criterion Met", "Criterion Not Met", or "Other"

Finding Status: Choose "Open" or "Closed"

Add Action: If the finding is a "criterion not met," you should describe your plans for making improvements by adding an Action. In the example of the licensure test, faculty might decide to examine course syllabi to determine whether the course content reflects that of the test. Other Actions might include re-examining admission policies, providing test preparation assistance through student organizations, etc. The date indicates when the faculty discussed and proposed the remedy.

Action follow-up information: Now that an Action has been proposed, you will need to show how/when you determined the success of that action. Add a new Finding to address the success of the proposed action.

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