Florida Atlantic University
Intellectual Foundation Program
Academic Assessment Plan

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Website: [http://www.fau.edu/ugstudies/Intellectual_Foundations_Program_for_Faculty.php](http://www.fau.edu/ugstudies/Intellectual_Foundations_Program_for_Faculty.php)
Introduction

Florida Atlantic University believes that higher education should go well beyond preparing individuals for demanding careers in their chosen fields. It should also provide broad intellectual enrichment through systematic exposure to a diversity of academic experiences. The purpose of the Intellectual Foundations Program (IFP) in this endeavor is to develop the intellectual skills, habits of thought, ethical values, and love of learning that transcend the choice of major. These are the hallmarks of educated men and women capable of meeting effectively the social, political, and economic challenges of contemporary life.

Thus, the mission of a comprehensive university education is to produce graduates who can intelligently analyze information, appreciate diverse peoples and ideas, and adapt to change through the self-motivated acquisition of new knowledge.

Consequently, Florida Atlantic University's Intellectual Foundations Program is a carefully devised program that draws on many subject areas to provide and reinforce essential skills and values from different points of view. It equips students with the academic tools they will need to succeed, not only as undergraduates in their degree programs, but also as responsible citizens in a complex world.

What is the purpose of the IFP?

The purpose of the IFP is to ensure that all FAU graduates are introduced to all major arenas of human intellectual and creative endeavor so that they may learn a common set of basic intellectual skills, cultivate the capacity for critical thought in multiple arenas, and equip themselves to lead meaningful lives as global citizens.

IFP Course Approval Procedures

The Core Curriculum Committee (CCC), a subcommittee of the University Undergraduate Programs Committee (UUPC), oversees the development, implementation, and assessment of the Intellectual Foundations Program which was revised in spring 2015. The CCC includes three representatives from the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters, two representatives from the Charles E. Schmidt College of Science, and one representative from each of the other colleges offering undergraduate degrees. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies chairs the committee and is a non-voting member of the CCC as well as the Director of Assessment for Undergraduate Studies (see Appendix A for current roster). The CCC reviews courses for inclusion in the Intellectual Foundations Program.

Which courses need to have an IFP outcomes assessment?

The courses that require IFP outcomes assessment can be found in Appendix B. Each foundation area has a list of courses that need to target the specific student learning outcomes for that foundation area. Please note that special population courses (e.g., Navitas) are not exempt from this requirement.
What are the student learning outcomes that I need to target in my course?

Student learning outcomes for each foundation are listed in Appendix B. The student learning outcomes are somewhat general so that they can apply to the diverse range of courses in that particular foundation area. It will be up to the department, or each individual instructor to further define that outcome for their specific course. Often, this is accomplished by identifying assessments, assignments, instruments, or test items that measure or “fit to” the foundation learning outcomes. For example, an instructor may operationalize the student learning outcome ”Explain important scientific concepts, principles and paradigms” by identifying current course projects, exams, tests, test items, or assessments that involve student comprehension of these targets. A common practice for multiple choice tests is to identify specific test times that match each student learning outcome, and then use these items to create subtests for each learning outcome. After the items are administered, instructors produce subtest scores for each student, and establish a cut-off score that represents the point at which a student has “passed” or “met” the learning outcome. A similar procedure can be used to judge student performances, presentations, or products.

Do I need to put anything in my syllabus?

Your syllabus should list the IFP student learning outcomes as delineated in Appendix B. It communicates IFP course content to students, and helps us verify course level integration of our IFP outcomes to the State, and to our accreditation body. A syllabus for each course should be included in your yearly report.

When do I have to assess my students?

IFP courses need to be sampled once an academic year. Some instructors sample each semester. The decision is up to the department or instructor to choose which semester in an academic year to test students learning outcomes.

Assessments (instruments, tests, etc.) can be given any time during the semester, as long as students have had ample opportunity to learn the material. Some instructors administer IFP assessments (or embedded test items) as a final. Other instructors give multiple assessments or embedded items throughout the course. The latter option is usually used when an instructor wishes to focus on one learning outcome before scaffolding up to a subsequent outcome. For example, an instructor may give an assessment on theory and framework at midterm, and then another assessment on critical reflection at finals, after students have had time to apply their theoretical knowledge.

What types of assessments are acceptable?

Instructors are encouraged to either use existing assessments in their course, or to create an assessment to match the Foundation Area student learning outcomes. The instructor is in charge of defining the learning outcome within their discipline, and can target specific areas of interest. The type of assessment/instrument/test (e.g., multiple choice, T/F, Short Answer,
project, essays) used is up to the department/instructor and should be selected in consultation with the Director of Assessment for Undergraduate Studies.

Performance assessments that require instructor judgements (e.g., papers, presentations, experiments, etc.,) can be used. However, these assessments are difficult to administer in large classrooms due to the time intense nature of scoring each student performance. In these cases, the instructor may “grade” a student performance, for the course, and then use a random sample of them for further, more intense scoring to target the IFP student learning outcomes. The Director of Undergraduate Assessment can help you determine an adequate sample size.

The Core Curriculum Committee wants this process to be as unobtrusive as possible, allowing instructors to use their professional judgment and discipline expertise to drive the process, and the interpretation of data. With embedded assessments or test items, “Assessment and the consequent improvement of teaching and learning is in the hands of the instructor rather than an administrator or outside testing agency” (Gerretson and Colson, 2005).

Why aren’t grades used to assess IFP courses?

Grades are an holistic assessment of student performance across a large number of learning outcomes or targets for an entire course experience. Grades may not measure specific IFP outcomes. A student may be very adept at defining terms and concepts but not be able to critically analyze claims, analyses or methodology within the discipline of the course. This is important information to an instructor who may be looking for ways to improve the course, or to students who need to prepare for a subsequent course, program, or employment opportunity. It is difficult to know where a problem lies or an improvement is needed if the feedback of student learning is too general.

What if there are multiple sections of my IFP course?

Not all sections need to be tested each year. The Core Curriculum Committee, in consultation with the department, makes the decision on which section will be tested and in which semester. The Core Curriculum Committee requires a representative sample of students for a course, and justification must be provided in the reporting process. It is acceptable to choose only one section of a course, provided this course has enough students to be a representative sample. The Director of Undergraduate Assessment can assist departments in determining the percentage of students that are required for an adequate sample. Once an assessment design is created, the department should expect a rotation of course sections in the sampling for each year. However, some departments test all sections of a particular course to eliminate sampling error (e.g., instructor, time of day, etc.).

What about sections that are taught by TAs or Adjunct Faculty?

All courses that are a part of the IFP are held to the same assessment standards regardless of who is teaching the course. The Core Curriculum Committee will advise departments that have staffing issues that affect sampling, or their ability to obtain a representative sample.
What about online courses?

Online courses must be assessed if they are listed as an IFP course. Our accrediting body requires online courses to be included in our program evaluation of IFP courses. The Center for e-Learning has worked closely with the Director of Assessment for Undergraduate Studies to provide a course structure that is consistent between the IFP and online course requirements. The module approach used by e-Learning lends itself quite nicely to assessing individual learning outcomes. The Center for e-Learning has loaded all of the IFP learning outcomes into the testing software used for online course assessment.

If I am using an existing assessment, instrument, assignment, or set of embedded items on a test, how is the IFP process different from what I am already doing?

The only difference is that IFP scores must be produced for each learning outcome rather than as a total score on the overall test. It is common practice for instructors to use overall test scores after administering an assessment, assignment, or test that covers a wide-range of skills or knowledge. This is an acceptable practice if the intent is to use accumulated total points for a course grade. For IFP assessment, student scores must be created for each learning outcome. So, instructors must either give a separate assessment/assignment/test for each learning outcome, or aggregate embedded items (or rubric scores) on their assessments to produce subtest scores for each outcome. Software options to assist faculty in disaggregating test scores are delineated below. Simply put, you have to provide individual student performance scores (and course averages) for EACH foundation learning outcome listed for your course. Please contact the Director of Assessment for Undergraduate Studies about using embedded assessments in your evaluation design.

How long do I have to make a selective response (e.g., multiple choice, matching) test for it to be a valid assessment for IFP learning outcomes?

Selective-response types of tests (e.g., MC, T/F, matching) are open to guessing error and require multiple items for reliability and validity. For example, a student facing a multiple choice item with four choices has a 25% chance of selecting the correct answer just by guessing. A T/F questions is susceptible to a 50% chance of guessing. So, how many items are required to make a valid test? The number depends on “the breadth of the standard, the type of item, and upon how critical that standard is to determining whether or not students have mastered that section, chapter or semester’s content” (Mueller, 2016). Wiggins and McTighe (1998) suggested at least ten to fifteen multiple-choice items are needed to measure a single outcome.

Do I have to use the same assessment or test items each year?

Ideally, you should use the same assessment or test items each year so that you can determine if any course changes have been effective. If you change test items, you should make sure that the average item difficulty levels remain relatively stable. You can obtain item response
statistics from most test analysis programs. The FAU testing center can provide these statistics for scan sheet tests if you request it on the submission form. Please contact the Director of Assessment for Undergraduate Studies if you want more information on creating item response results.

**How do I know if students meet a learning outcome?**

As the course instructor, you determine if a student has met a learning outcome by establishing cutoff scores for your test, subtest, assignment, instrument, or student evaluation. For example, if you have a 10-item multiple choice test, you may set a cut-off of 70% correct (7 out of 10) as the minimum level for student performance. If a student earns 70%, they met the learning outcome for the course. All that is left to do is calculate the percentage of students who met the learning outcome for the class (see Appendix C for an example data table).

You can also set a cut-off for rubric-based (performance judging) assessments. For example, if a student performance is being evaluated using a 4 point rubric or evaluation scale, you may set the cut-off so that students receiving a rating of a “3” or a “4” are considered to have met the learning outcome. Tallying the percentage or students who met the learning outcome for the course is calculated the same way as a selected response assessment.

**What happens if scores are low or students are not meeting IFP outcomes?**

This process is designed to focus on student learning and continuous improvement of IFP courses. Thus, the more important issue is “how are results being used to make decisions regarding improvement of the learning experience?” The interpretation of student learning results to make data driven changes is an accreditation requirement, and represents good assessment practice in service to our students. The IFP evaluation process is not designed to evaluate or punish instructors. The focus is on what students are learning, not how faculty are teaching. In fact, the report to the Core Curriculum Committee from the department does not require instructor names. It does require the interpretation of data and reporting any course changes as a result of that interpretation.

**Does the assessment, instrument, assignment, test or sub-test have to count towards the student’s overall grade for the course?**

It should count for a grade or be a part of the grading requirement for the course. Motivation is a significant factor in test performance effort. The purpose of using embedded assessments is so that instructors will use content pertinent to the purpose of the course, and to their discipline. As a result, it automatically fits into the grading structure of the course. The degree any specific assignment, instrument, assessment, test or subtest accounts for a grade is at the discretion of the instructor.

**Do all instructors of multiple section courses need to use the same test?**
While there is some benefit for instructors to use the same assessment, test, or test items, it is not required. The proportion of students meeting a learning outcome in independent course sections can be aggregated for the report. However, the collaboration between colleagues to create common assessments has led to productive dialogue about what is important to measure. This is especially true for knowledge and skills that are essential to students who continue into the program as a major.

**How and when do I report results?**

Links to the IFP report template and example reports can be found in the resource section below. Complete the report electronically and send it to the Director of Undergraduate Assessment at the contact provided in Appendix A. Reports are due upon conclusion of the academic semester in which the course(s) was offered and assessed, unless two semesters of sampling are required to get an ample sample size.

**How do I turn my test data into the format needed for the report?**

While instructors/departments may employ a data management system of their choice, several typical options are delineated below:

**1) FAU Testing Center Scantron Sheets.** If you administer tests that use bubble sheets (Scantron sheets), the FAU Testing Center can create learning outcome subtest reports for your IFP learning outcomes. You MUST provide the testing center with an attachment to your "Scanning Log Sheet" that identifies which test items are aligned with each of the IFP learning outcomes (e.g., Outcome #1= items 1, 4, 17, 19, 27, 45-55, Outcome#2= 2-3, 20-27, 29, 40). Please make sure to write “Requesting IFP learning outcomes report” on the Scanning Log Sheet. Also note that if you are submitting a test during peak times in the semester (e.g., midterm, finals), you may receive your IFP report separately at a later time. This is so that the center can maintain their schedule of returning test results in a timely manner for grade submission. You can find an example Scanning Log Sheet and an attachment example linked on our IFP webpage: [http://www.fau.edu/ugstudies/Intellectual_Foundations_Program_for_Faculty.php](http://www.fau.edu/ugstudies/Intellectual_Foundations_Program_for_Faculty.php)

**2) CANVAS.** CANVAS users can download student test data into Excel files using the "Students Analysis" tab as instructed in the table below. Contact the Director of Assessment for Undergraduate Studies to assist you in analyzing the data from this download.
3) **Text Publisher.** Your text publisher may be able to conduct the analysis if you use their classroom testing packages in your course. Most of them automatically provide item analysis results (e.g., item difficulty, item discrimination, distractor analysis) which is **NOT** the same as testing individual student performance on specific learning outcomes. Their representative may tell you that it is the same, but you cannot aggregate item performance statistics to determine an individual student’s outcome competency. There is an alternative if you use a text publisher that does not provide learning outcome reports on their platform, but it is time intensive. You will have to ask them for the Excel testing output file that lists each student’s name, and indicates either their selections to each of the items, or if they correctly responded to each item. You must then use the spreadsheet to set cut-offs and calculate the proportion of students passing each outcome. An example spreadsheet can be found on our IFP resource page.

4) **Commercial Assessment Platforms** (e.g., LiveText, Campus Labs, Data 360, etc.). Most of these systems are designed for performance ratings data. These typically involve the instructor using a rubric or scoring scheme to judge a student performance (paper, presentation, experiment, recital, art piece, etc.). The instructor then enters the ratings for each student, by outcome or criterion. The difficulty with these commercial systems is that many cannot aggregate multiple ratings that measure a single outcome. For example, if your learning outcome is “demonstrate written communication skills” and you rate students
separately on “rhetorical structure,” “mechanics,” and “style,” these systems will not aggregate scores to produce a single score. The other major problem with these systems is that they can be expensive, and often require connections with a Learning Management System such as Blackboard or CANVAS. Additionally, all of these platforms are designed for adoption for use across an institution or college and become cost prohibitive to use by department or individual instructor.

5) Educational Assessment Corporation (EAC). The EAC is an assessment system that integrates with Blackboard and CANVAS. FAU has already purchased EAC and uses it for the assessment of online courses. Tests can be entered on EAC, or transferred from other sources such as Blackboard or CANVAS. The system was designed for outcomes assessment and instructors can match entire tests/assessments/instruments, or even individual items with a specific learning outcome. This may be a good option for online courses. Contact the elearning office for more information.

Contact the Director of Undergraduate Assessment if you have questions about how to manage and store your student learning results, or if your method of assessing student learning does not lend itself to any of the options above.

What happens if an instructor or department does not comply with the IFP assessment requirement?

Assessing IFP learning outcomes is a requirement for all IFP courses and they must be assessed regularly to maintain inclusion in the IFP. The assessment process is designed to be as unobtrusive as possible. However, it is the responsibility of the faculty member to develop and apply an IFP evaluation plan in their course(s). Often, faculty members find that what they are already doing will remained relatively unchanged, with the exception of some slight modification to testing practices, and constructing a brief report to the Core Curriculum Committee. However, in the event that a course does not regularly assess IFP outcomes, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies will communicate non-compliance with the appropriate college dean.

Will I receive feedback from my report?

Yes. The CCC will review all report materials and respond with a feedback summary. Their focus will not be on evaluating course content, but rather on promoting good assessment practices. Their primary evaluation concerns will be on: adequacy of sampling, validity of instrumentation, accuracy of student learning data, and how data is used to enrich the teaching/learning environment. You should submit sample questions with your report to help the committee provide constructive feedback on assessment practices.

Any tips or advice to make this an easier process?

Here are some tips to consider:
a) Use an easy slope of implementation in terms of the number of faculty and sections of courses. You can start with one section of the course to get the process started, and then branch out to additional sections in subsequent academic years.

b) For the first year, you can choose a section of a course that has an experienced faculty member teaching it. Someone that is familiar with outcomes-based assessment can implement the plan and then help others if needed.

c) Measure what you value. Think about what you hope students take away from your class. Maybe there are certain core concepts, or knowledge about major theories, or performance of basic skills that are deemed more essential to the basic understanding of your discipline.

d) Contact the Director of Undergraduate Assessment at 561-297-4560 (aambrosio@fau.edu) to ask about the process, or if you have any questions.
## Appendix A. Intellectual Foundation Program Core Curriculum Committee Members 2018-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Title(s)</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>e-mail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Ambrosio</td>
<td>Undergraduate Studies</td>
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<td>561-297-3323</td>
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<td>Marc Rhorer</td>
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<td>561-297-0210</td>
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<td>Nancey France</td>
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<td>561-297-2535</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marcella Munson</td>
<td>French and Comparative Literature</td>
<td>Associate Professor and Chair</td>
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<td>561-297-2118</td>
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<td>Ed Pratt</td>
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<td>Ellen Ryan</td>
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## Appendix B. Intellectual Foundation Program Learning Outcomes by Foundation Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Courses (Group A)</th>
<th>Courses (Group B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate effective written communication skills by exhibiting the control of rhetorical elements that include clarity, coherence, comprehensiveness, and mechanical correctness.</td>
<td>ENC 1101 College Writing I CSV 1102 College Writing II CSV 1103 College Writing III</td>
<td>ANT 1471 Cultural Difference in a Globalized Society CSV 1950 University Honors Seminar in Writing ENC 1939 Special Topic: College Writing ENC 2452 Honors Composition for Science HIS 2050 Writing History NSP 1195 Being Cared For: Reflections from Other Side of Bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Analyze, interpret and evaluate information to formulate critical conclusions and arguments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify and apply standards of academic integrity.</td>
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### I. Foundations of Written Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses (Group B)</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| MAC 1105 College Algebra CSV 2311 Calculus I with Analytic Geometry I CSV 1010
  Calculus II CSV 1106 Calculus III CSV 1107 Calculus IV |

### II. Foundations of Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning

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<tr>
<th>Courses (Group B)</th>
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</table>
| MAC 1114 Trigonometry CSV 1010 Precalculus Algebra CSV 1147 Precalculus Algebra &
  Trigonometry CSV 2233 Methods of Calculus CSV 2102 Logic CSV 2312 Calculus with
  Analytic Geometry 2 |

### III. Foundations of Science and the Natural World

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses (Group B)</th>
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</table>
| AST 2002 Introduction to Astronomy CSV 1005 General Biology CSV 1010 Biological
  Principles I CSV 2085 Anatomy and Physiology I CSV 1020C Contemporary Chemical
  Issues CSV 2045 General Chemistry I CSV 2000 Blue Planet CSV 1001 Environmental
  Science and Sustainability CSV 2048 General Physics I CSV 2053 College Physics I |

### IV. Foundations of Society and Human Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses (Group B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| AMH 2020 United States History Since 1877 CSV 2000 Introduction to Anthropology
  CSV 2013 Macroeconomics Principles CSV 2041 Government of the United States CSV
  1012 Introduction to Psychology CSV 1000 Principles of Sociology |

### V. Foundations in Global Citizenship (there are no Group A or B distinction for
Foundation V courses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses (Group B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| SOW 1005 Global Perspectives of Social Services CSV 2450 Global Society CSV 2012
  History of Civilization I CSV 2022 History of Civilization II |

### VI. Foundations of Humanities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses (Group B)</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| ARH 2000 Art Appreciation CSV 2010 Music Appreciation CSV 2010 Film Appreciation
  CSV 2000 Theatre Appreciation CSV 2208 Culture & Architecture CSV 2100
  Appreciation of Dance CSV 2000 Film Appreciation |

### After completion of the associated lab, the student will be able to:

- Demonstrate the theory or methods behind forms of human expression.
Appendix C. Example of cut-off score report for multiple courses within a foundation area.

Example: The table below reports multiple math courses for Foundation II with cut-off scores on subtests for each Foundation Student Learning Outcome. In this example, the instructors for these courses report the percentages of students either “at/above” or “below” their set cutoffs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>SLO #1 At/Above</th>
<th>SLO #1 Below</th>
<th>SLO #2 At/Above</th>
<th>SLO #2 Below</th>
<th>SLO #3 At/Above</th>
<th>SLO #3 Below</th>
<th>n</th>
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<tr>
<td>MAC 1105</td>
<td>Fall 14</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spring 15</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAC 1114</td>
<td>Fall 14</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spring 15</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAC 1140</td>
<td>Fall 14</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spring 15</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAC 1147</td>
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<td>15%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>57%</td>
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References


Resources

Consult our IFP Resource page for information to help you assess and report IFP student learning outcomes. The following topics are available at:

- Using CANVAS to Assess IFP Student Learning Outcomes
- IFP Report Template
- Example IFP Reports
  - Reports using a rubric based assessment
  - Reports using a selected response test (e.g., multiple choice)
  - Hybrid reports (rubric based and selected response)
- Example Excel spreadsheet to use with text publisher test result files (xls)
- FAU IFP Academic Assessment Plan