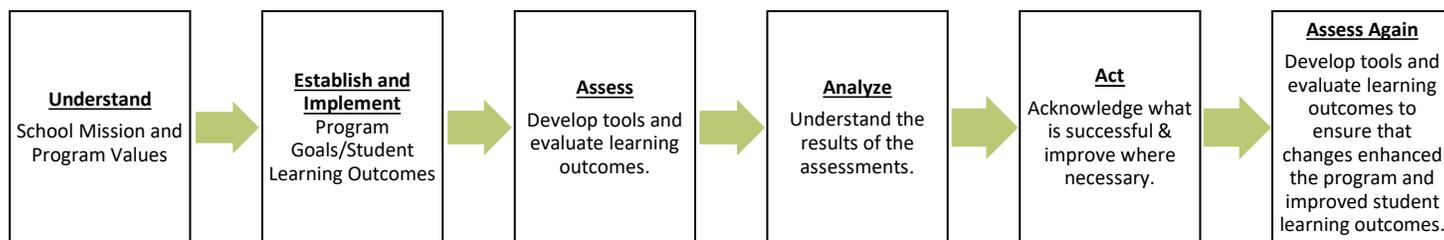## Academic Program Assessment

What is Academic Assessment?

Assessment is an organic process that consists of *designing* and *implementing* methods to gather data to improve teaching and student learning. When assessment is a *holistic initiative,* the focus expands to ascertain the knowledge and skills learned throughout the entire program and how effectively everyone involved is helping them learn.

Assessment Cycle

| **Understand** School Mission and Program Values | → | **Establish and Implement** Program Goals/Student Learning Outcomes | → | **Assess** Develop tools and evaluate learning outcomes. | → | **Analyze** Understand the results of the assessments. | → | **Act** Acknowledge what is successful & improve where necessary. | → | **Assess Again** Develop tools and evaluate learning outcomes to ensure that changes enhanced the program and improved student learning outcomes. |

Why is *Academic Program Assessment* Important?
There are numerous benefits to assessment initiatives which fall into two categories:

✓ **Improvement –** program assessment provides a platform for faculty and administrators to examine the current state of the curriculum, identifying strengths and weaknesses.

✓ **Accountability –** program assessment becomes the method of demonstrating academic progress and achievements to *stakeholders.*

These stakeholders include *prospective students, employers,* and *accrediting bodies* including **NASPAA (Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration) and Middles States Commission on Higher Education.**

Assessment at Marxe

The Office of Academic Programs and Learning Assessment Committee (LAC) guide the assessment process. If you have any questions related to assessment, please contact Melissa Sultana, Deputy Director of Academic Programs at MSPIA.Assessment@baruch.cuny.edu

Guiding Principles for Assessment

The Office of Academic Programs has established clear objectives for assessment efforts:

1) The ultimate goal of assessment is *continuous* **program improvement**.

2) Assessment is successful when it is **mission** and **value focused**.

3) Assessment initiatives are most effective when delivered as a collaborative effort – a *faculty-driven process* supported by *administrative leadership*.

4) Assessment initiatives are most effective when a **positive culture** is cultivated and woven throughout all aspects of the academic environment.

What Are Learning Goals?

Course and Program Goals within a degree provide an understanding of the significant expectations of that program.

Program learning goals or outcomes are broad statements that address higher order learning as well as encompass the degree's mission, values, and overall expectations. Program goals address what a student should know and be able to demonstrate by graduation; they should be evident at various points throughout the curriculum.

Course goals, which are specific to the content of a particular class, are often derived from program goals and provide course expectations and connect to activities associated with achieving them.

When relevant program goals are emphasized in class, students can align course goals with broader program expectations in order to draw curricular connections across the program. This allows students to understand their expectations and hold themselves accountable.

What You Need to Know as a Student:

➢ The goal of assessment is to enhance the curriculum by evaluating student learning. This is accurately done by collecting a valid sample of work in different courses that reflect students' best effort.

  o Direct Evidence - includes student work such as *case studies, capstones, portfolios,* and *oral presentations.*
  o Indirect Evidence - involves data that demonstrates perceived student learning such as *surveys* and *graduation rates.*

➢ All assignments collected are made *anonymous* when used for academic program assessment.

➢ Assignments are scored by neutral evaluators to better understand students' proficiency in relation to program goals.

➢ Actions are determined based on what will best benefit students and the overall program.

➢ *The purpose of Assessment is to continually evaluate learning in order to enhance program and curriculum quality.*

Master of Public Administration (MPA) program
(Traditional, Executive MPA, and National Urban Fellows)

The mission of the Austin W. Marxe School of Public and International Affairs and its degree programs is to empower the next generation of public and nonprofit leaders, advance knowledge about public life and policy, and engage communities across our city, nation, and world to foster effective, inclusive institutions and societies.

Students within the Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree programs at Marxe are expected to obtain knowledge and demonstrate skills associated with the following Program Learning Goals approved by the faculty and that fall under five Universal Competencies established by NASPAA.

1) **To *lead* and *manage* in public governance**.

   A. Learning Goal A: Use management and leadership theories to analyze the design, operation, and governance of public and nonprofit organizations.
   B. Learning Goal B: Develop recommendations, based on multiple analytical frames, to improve the management of public and nonprofit organizations.

2) **To *participate in* and *contribute to* the *policy* process**.

   A. Distinguish and effectively employ the steps in the policy process: problem/goal identification; stakeholder identification and analysis; financing; approval; implementation and evaluation.
   B. Identify alternative policy options; assess their potential feasibility and effectiveness; describe how the policy options are expected to affect outcomes (mechanisms).

3) **To *analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems* and *make decisions***.

   A. Analyze, evaluate, and draw valid conclusions from social science research such as policy, applied, or evaluation research.
   B. Design social science research such as policy, applied, evaluation research using qualitative or quantitative methods.
   C. Conduct social science research such as policy, applied, or evaluation research.
   D. Apply social science or evaluation research findings to public policy questions and decision making situations.

4) **To articulate and apply a *public service perspective*.**

   A. Learning Goal A: Identify varied and conflicting values or needs within the public sphere and understand the implications they have on management and/or policy decisions.

5) **To *communicate* and interact productively with a *diverse* and *changing workforce* and *citizenry*.**

   A. To construct well-reasoned and well-organized written materials tailored to audiences' perspectives and levels of understanding in a professionally competent manner.
   B. To deliver well-reasoned and well-organized presentations tailored to audiences' perspectives and levels of understanding in a professionally competent manner.
   C. Recognize and value the diversity of organizational structures and cultures, as well as organizational complexity, in order to communicate effectively.