Elements of an Assessment Plan

It should be:
- Meaningful
- Manageable
- Sustainable

1. How will each outcome be assessed?
2. Who will collect and analyze the data?
3. How will the data be collected?
4. When and how often will it be done?
5. Who will reflect on the results? When?
6. How will results and implications be documented?
7. How will assessment of this outcome be aligned with general education competencies?

An assessment plan need not assess an outcome in every student – you can select a representative sample.

Properties of a good assessment plan:
- Valid – directly reflects the learning outcome being assessed
- Reliable – including inter-rater reliability when subjective judgments are made
- Actionable – results point reviewers toward challenges that can be approached
- Efficient and cost-effective in time and money
- Interesting to faculty and other stakeholders
- Triangulation – multiple lines of evidence point to the same conclusion

Good ideas for assessment planning:
1. Focus on what is important
2. Don’t try to do too much at once
3. Take samples
4. Pilot test procedures
5. Use rubrics
6. Close the loop
7. Include all relevant faculty
8. Keep a written record

NB: In the end, you will have at least two written records – one the thorough summary of your methodology, results, discussion, and conclusions and one a more abbreviated summary of all of these things but in a much more concise form.

An assessment plan is a good vehicle to examine the alignment of your curriculum with your desired student learning outcomes.
### Example of alignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Introductory course</th>
<th>Gateway course</th>
<th>Upper level electives</th>
<th>Capstone course(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative reasoning</td>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral communication</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written communication</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information literacy skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I = Introduced  
D = Developed  
M = Mastery required

**Things to notice in the above:**

1. Quantitative reasoning gets introduced but not developed and there is no mechanism to ensure mastery.
2. Oral communication is introduced and developed but, again, there is no clear mechanism to ensure mastery.
3. Information literacy skills are developed, but are they adequately introduced in a previous course? Does the gateway course presume a level of skills not communicated to students?

The first goal of an assessment plan is to determine whether results support the status quo – if they do, that’s fine. If they don’t, the next question is what kind of change do the results suggest. Four types of change are:

1. **Pedagogy** – e.g., changing course assignments, providing more formative feedback, using more active learning strategies to motivate and engage students
2. **Curriculum** – e.g., changing prerequisites, adding a required capstone, inserting a course with substantial quantitative reasoning
3. **Student support** – e.g., improving tutoring services, developing specialized support by library or academic skills center staff, clarifying advising
4. **Faculty support** – e.g., providing a workshop on writing, a retreat to improve a gateway course, or bringing in a consultant

There is another document titled Categorizing Use of Results that may also be helpful.