

# Strategic Assessment of Graduate College Academic Support Services as Part of University Assessment

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**COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO

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# UT Assessment Process

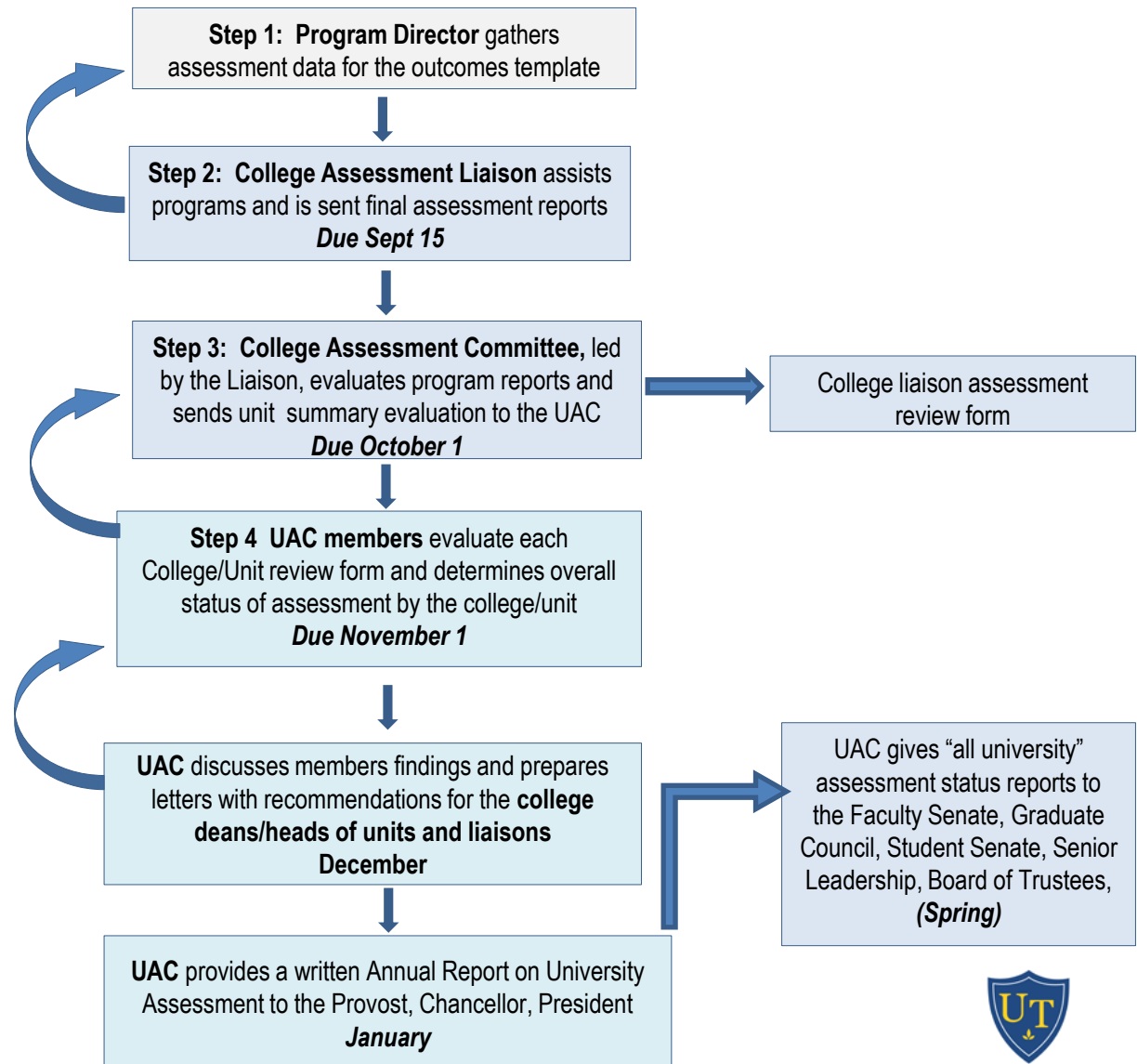
- Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Program Review (est. 2012)
- University Assessment Committee (UAC)
- Colleges and Units (Academic and Service)
  - Program Assessment Committees
- Stakeholders- Students, Faculty, Admin, other



# University Assessment Committee

- Established Spring 2002
- Oversight, Development systematic process, Training
- 2009- required program level(major/track) assessment of student learning outcomes
- 2010- required academic support unit assessment of service outcomes (e.g. COGS, Libraries, Honors)
- 2012-required academic unit assessment of student support service outcomes (advising, admissions, etc.)

# UT Process for Assessment



# Best Practice

## Assessment of Academic Support Service Units



# Academic Support Service Units

- Stand alone or embedded in an academic unit
  - UT College of Graduate Studies (COGS) is a stand alone unit
- Primary function
  - Support the academic mission of UT
  - Support the primary stakeholders - potential students, matriculated students, alumni, faculty, staff and administration



# Academic Support Service Units

- Types of academic support services vary among the College/units.
  - focused to support the student learning environment
  - broader in scope for congruency with all aspects of the student experience and associated administrative needs
  - various institutional organizational structures



# Why Assess Academic Support Services?

- Student success includes more than achievement of student learning outcomes
  - Student experience
  - Preparation for career
  - Supplemental procedure responsibilities
- Students quit due to poor services
- Academic support services can have direct impact on student success
- Service is part of student-centeredness





# Assessment of Academic Support Service Outcomes (SSOs)

- SLOs are replaced with SSOs
  - “Adapt the wheel- not reinvent the wheel!”
    - CGS guide- Assessment and Review of Graduate Programs



# UT COGS Services-Fast Facts

COGS provides centralized services to the students, faculty and administration.

- 10 Colleges with Grad and Professional programs
- 166 graduate degree programs
  - 40 doctorate
  - 126 Masters
  - 28 graduate certificate
- Fall 2013- 4,600 grad students
- 1632 degrees awarded in 2012-2013
- FY 13- 883 stipends/tuition scholarships
- FY 13- 31 Graduate Student Professional Development Programs



# Best Practice

Strategic Alignment of Assessment of  
Academic Support Service Outcomes



# Strategic Alignment of SSOs

- Align with UT and COGS Missions and Strategic Plans
- Align with COGS services
- Align with HLC six fundamental questions of student learning assessment
- Incorporate CGS-ETS 2012 Commission-Recommendations for Universities
- Align with program specific accreditation criteria
- Other?

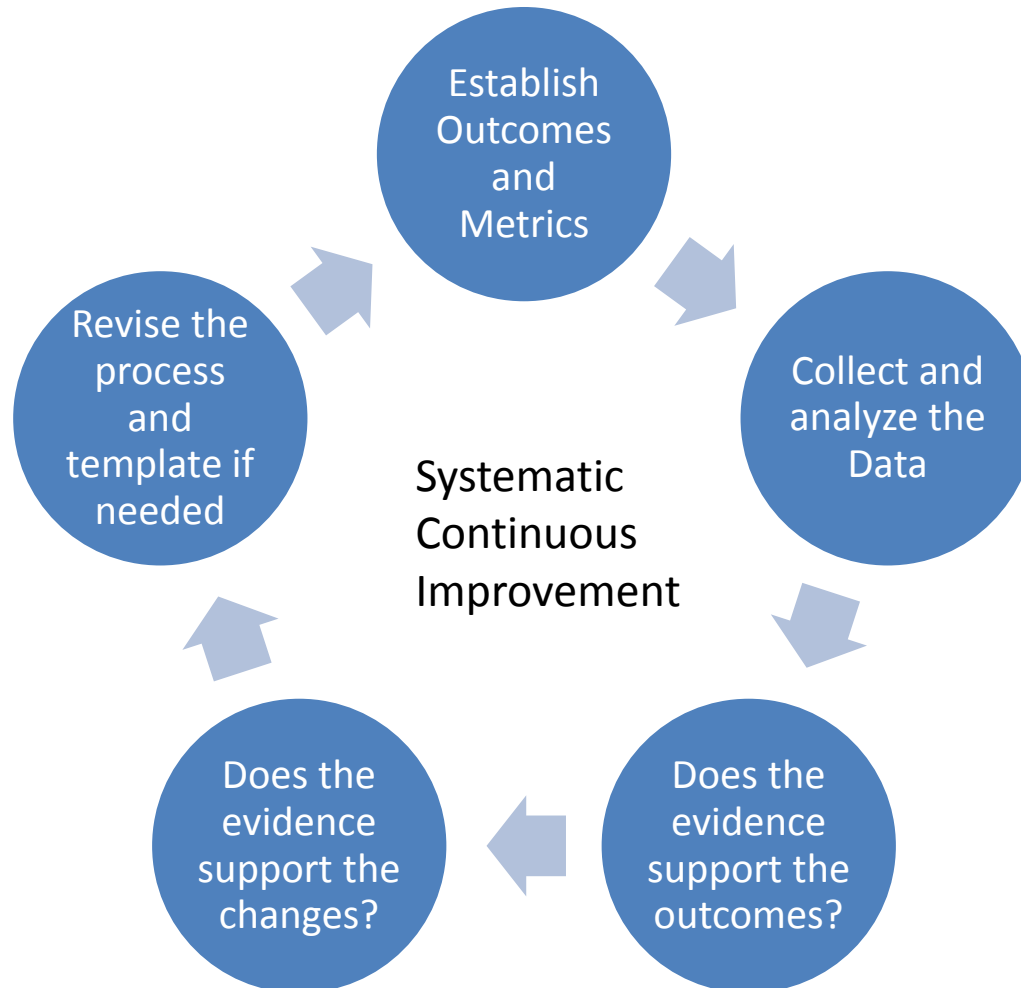


# Best Practice

Systematic Assessment Process that  
Demonstrates Continuous  
Improvement of Services



# COGS Annual Assessment Plan and Process



# COGS –Assessment Plan

## Assess **academic support service outcomes:**

- Service outcomes organized into several categories of service type to our stakeholders (predominately graduate students and graduate faculty)
- For each service type, several *measurable* outcomes, goals and objectives have been enumerated.
- A review process that includes data collection methods, metrics, and responsibility is ongoing.
- Annual assessment of the SSOs are used to inform changes when needed.
- See COGS web site-  
<http://www.utoledo.edu/graduate/>



# COGS Service Categories

- A. Recruitment of Graduate Student applicants
- B. Application and Admission processes
- C. Orientation processes: graduate students
- D. Student progress and compliance
- E. Graduate Student Development Workshops, Research forums
- F. Graduate Student Academic Appeals and Grievances





# COGS Service Categories

- G. Graduate student financial support
- H. Graduation, audits, clearances
- I. Graduate faculty membership
- J. Graduate faculty communications
- K. Graduate program, course approvals
- L. Graduate program review process



## A. Recruitment of Graduate Student applicants

Data collection methods, metrics and sources	Applicable service outcomes	Direct or Indirect Measure of service	Frequency of data collection and review	Person(s) responsible for reviewing data
Data collected is the designation of complete or incomplete.	1. Collaborate with UT administration on the adaptation of the “recruiter” electronic system that tracks communication with prospective applicants for utilization in COGS.	Direct	Annually	Assistant Dean for Graduate Admissions  Graduate Orientation and Enrollment Specialist
Data collected is the designation of complete or incomplete.	2. Develop/revise recruitment materials to promote UT graduate academic programs to prospective applicants.	Direct	Annually	Assistant Dean for Graduate Admissions  Graduate Orientation and Enrollment Specialist
Data collected is the designation of complete or incomplete. Data collected is number of applicants.	3. Develop a recruitment plan to attract TRIO undergraduate students to apply to UT Graduate programs and COGS scholarships.	Direct	Annually	Assistant Dean for Graduate Admissions  Graduate Orientation and Enrollment Specialist
Data collected is the designation of complete or incomplete.	4. Establish relationships with UT enrollment management and external organizations to identify processes for identifying potential applications to UT graduate programs.	Direct	Annually	Assistant Dean for Graduate Admissions  Graduate Orientation and Enrollment Specialist

## H. Graduation, audits, clearances

Data collection methods, metrics and sources	Applicable service outcomes	Direct or Indirect Measure of service	Frequency of data collection and review	Person(s) responsible for reviewing data
<p>Data collected from COGS staff reports; COGS graduate student exit survey.</p>	<p>1. Review mechanisms/workflows to enhance efficiency and timely processes. Successful communication as indicated by applicants as indicated by satisfaction scores &gt; 85%.</p>	<p>Direct and Indirect</p>	<p>End of Fall, Spring, Summer semesters.</p>	<p>Dean Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs Thesis and Dissertation Services Specialist Manager of Administrative Services- HSC Graduation Services Specialist</p>
<p>Data collected from COGS staff reports; COGS graduate student exit survey.</p>	<p>2. Track student issues that delay or prevent clearance to inform students earlier. Successful communication as indicated by satisfaction scores &gt; 85%.</p>	<p>Direct and Indirect</p>	<p>End of Fall, Spring, Summer semesters</p>	<p>Dean Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs Thesis and Dissertation Services Specialist Manager of Administrative Services- HSC Graduation Services Specialist</p>
<p>Data collected from COGS staff reports; COGS graduate student exit survey.</p>	<p>3. COGS staff and communication processes are responsive, effective and efficient for students as indicated by satisfaction scores &gt; 85%..</p>	<p>Direct</p>	<p>End of Fall, Spring, Summer semesters</p>	<p>Dean Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs Thesis and Dissertation Services Specialist Manager of Administrative Services- HSC Graduation Services Specialist</p>

# Stakeholder participation in COGS Assessment

- COGS Administration
  - Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
  - Assessment committee
- Council of Associate Graduate Deans
- Graduate Council
- Graduate Council Executive Committee
- Graduate Faculty
- Graduate Students



# Graduate Student Involvement in the Assessment Process

- Graduate student involvement in COGS assessment process is primarily through the survey response.
- COGS assessment committee
- Graduate students are voting members of Graduate Council and GCEC
  - Opportunity to provide feedback to assessment reports and processes



Establish  
Outcomes  
and  
Metrics

**COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE:  
ANNUAL REPORT TO UAC**



# Template for Assessment of Academic Support Student Services

- Aligned with the HLC six fundamental questions about student learning
- Aligned with the UT Academic Program Assessment reports of Student Learning Outcomes
- Template Elements
  - Mission
  - Academic support student service outcomes
  - Assessment measures
  - Assessment results and actions to improve services
  - Student involvement (if applicable)
  - Actions to improve Assessment process
  - Sharing and discussing assessment
  - Dissemination of assessment report
  - Self-evaluation of unit assessment
- See our web site for current templates  
<http://www.utoledo.edu/aapr/index.html>



# Best Practice

Strategic and Flexible  
Metrics/Measurements of Academic  
Support Service Outcomes





# Data Collection: Metrics, Methods and Sources

- COGS centralized services- high volume work load
- Unique to delivery of services is that adjustments (change) are sometimes immediate due to unforeseen circumstances.
- Each decision is not made due to direct data collection/analysis.
- Impossible to anticipate all possible situations and associated metrics
- Do not overwhelm staff time to develop/implement large numbers of measurement tools.
- The expertise and experience of the administrative staff allow spontaneous corrective decision making.

# Data Collection: Metrics, Methods and Sources

- Direct measure of *overall student success* is difficult
  - Measure individual indicators and extrapolate to overall success
  - Use indirect methods (e.g. student survey)
- Primary measurement tools
  - Survey results
  - Metrics of academic service delivery
  - *Keep it simple and efficient!*
  - *Avoid temptation to survey “everyone” for “everything”*
  - *Allow anecdotal observations*



# DATA Collection: Metrics, Methods and Sources

- Data and metrics aligned with the measurable Academic Support Service Outcomes
- Example: Demonstrate assessment by using the Graduate Student Exit Survey that is aligned with several service categories specific to students (A - H)



# Best Practice

Measurement tool(s) to collect both centralized and unit-specific data.



# Graduate Student Exit Survey

- COGS has conducted an exit survey of all graduating graduate students since Spring 2006.
  - Questions address services provided by COGS, other academic service units, and the College/Department that provides the graduate program. ***(centralized data!)***
- Beginning Spring 2011, COGS required students to complete the survey.
  - Response rate 99%



To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements about your graduate experience:

- Overall, the quality of my graduate educational experience was high.
- My program was intellectually challenging and stimulating.
- My academic program prepared me well for my professional career goals.
- My advisor and I met at appropriate intervals to discuss my program of study.
- My dissertation/thesis/project advisor discussed my research with me on a regular basis.



To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements about your graduate experience:

- My dissertation/thesis/project advisor critiqued my work in ways that helped my work progress.
- Information about academic policies and procedures was communicated sufficiently.
- Equipment and facilities were available when I needed them.
- There were adequate university services to assist with non-academic issues (health needs, personal, family).



Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the quality of information/advice/service received from the following sources:

- Advisor
- Members of my doctoral/thesis/project committee
- Staff in my department's office
- Department's Web-site
- Financial Aid
- Registrar
- Career Development
- Information Technology

COGS Exit Survey- [susan.pocotte@utoledo.edu](mailto:susan.pocotte@utoledo.edu)





# COGS specific

- Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the quality of information/advice/service received from COGS Web-site.
- Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the quality of information/advice/service received from the following sources:
  - College of Graduate Studies Staff



# To what extent do you agree/disagree with each of the following statements?

- The College of Graduate Studies was accessible to me.
- The College of Graduate Studies was responsive.
- The College of Graduate Studies performed its functions effectively.
- The College of Graduate Studies performed its functions efficiently.
- The College of Graduate Studies was consistent in service delivery.



# General

- What was your employment status for most of your graduate education?
- Which of the following statements BEST describes your post-degree employment status?
- Location of employer or anticipated location of employer.
- Please make any comments you wish to share regarding your UT graduate experience.



**Collect  
and  
Analyze  
the Data**



# Trended Data from the Graduate Student Exit Surveys

- Aggregate data
- Students assured responses anonymous
- 27 specific questions
- One open-ended question
  - Please make any comments you wish to share regarding your UT graduate experience.
- Respondent numbers
  - Spring 2011            n=549
  - Fall 2011                n=280
  - Spring 2012            n=503
  - Summer 2012          n=246
  - Fall 2012                n=198
  - Spring 2013            n= 487
  - Summer 2013          n=267



# Trended Data from the Graduate Student Exit Surveys

- Indicates ***sustained achievement*** of COGS academic support service outcomes related to students.
  - 80-90 % of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied
- Indicates ***sustained satisfaction*** with other service units and academic depts.
  - 80-90 % of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied



**Does the  
data  
support the  
outcomes?**



Q. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statement?  
 The College of Graduate Studies was accessible to me.

	Spring 2011	Summer 2011	Fall 2011	Spring 2012	Summer 2012	Fall 2012	Spring 2013	Summer 2013
Strongly agree	23.9%	34%	33 %	27 %	37 %	34%	30%	40%
Agree	65.9 %	59%	61 %	64 %	57 %	60%	61%	52%
Disagree	2.4 %	2%	2.5 %	1 %	2 %	2%	3%	1%
Strongly Disagree	1.5 %	1%	0.5 %	1 %	0 %	0%	0%	0%
Not applicable	4.4 %	4%	3 %	7 %	4 %	4%	6%	6%

SSO: C . Student progress and compliance

1. Attain 100% submission and compliance levels for Plans of Study, GRAD forms, other required grade levels, and completion of program exams, and submission ETD. (Qualifying Exams, scholarly projects etc.)

4. COGS staff and communication processes are responsive, effective and efficient for students as indicated by satisfaction scores > 85%.



Q. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the quality of information/advice/service received from the following source:  
**College of Graduate Studies Staff**

	Spring 2011	Summer 2011	Fall 2011	Spring 2012	Summer 2012	Fall 2012	Spring 2013	Summer 2013
Very Satisfied	24.8 %	33%	30 %	28 %	37 %	31%	28%	41%
Satisfied	55.7 %	52%	54 %	55 %	54 %	57%	57%	47%
Unsatisfied	6 %	5%	7 %	6 %	3 %	5%	5%	3%
Very unsatisfied	2.2 %	2%	1 %	1 %	1 %	1%	1%	1%
Not applicable	8.4 %	7%	8 %	10 %	5 %	6%	8%	7%

SSO: E. Graduate Student development workshops, Research forums

1. Monthly information to students on necessary skills for success in graduate school.
2. Provide information on networking and career opportunities through COGS web site and workshops.

Q. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statement?  
 The College of Graduate Studies performed its functions effectively.

	Spring 2011	Summer 2011	Fall 2011	Spring 2012	Summer 2012	Fall 2012	Spring 2013	Summer 2013
Strongly agree	23.0%	29%	28 %	24 %	35 %	30%	27%	39%
Agree	61.9 %	59%	60 %	65 %	56 %	62%	60%	51%
Disagree	4.6 %	5%	7 %	4 %	5 %	5%	6%	3%
Strongly Disagree	2.4 %	1%	2 %	1 %	1 %	0%	1%	1%
Not applicable	5.8 %	4%	3 %	6 %	3 %	4%	6%	6%

SSO: G. Graduate student financial support  
 6. Maintain effective and timely communication with programs/students.  
 Successful communication as indicated by applicants as indicated by satisfaction scores > 85%.

Q. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statement?  
 The College of Graduate Studies was consistent in service delivery.

	Spring 2011	Summer 2011	Fall 2011	Spring 2012	Summer 2012	Fall 2012	Spring 2013	Summer 2013
Strongly agree	23.5%	28%	27 %	21 %	33 %	27%	27%	37%
Agree	59.2 %	58%	60 %	64 %	58 %	62%	59%	51%
Disagree	6.4 %	6%	6 %	5 %	4.5 %	5%	6%	5%
Strongly Disagree	1.8 %	0%	2 %	1 %	0.5 %	1%	1%	1%
Not applicable	6.6 %	5%	5 %	9 %	4 %	6%	6%	6%

SSO: Multiple Categories

Q. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statement about your graduate experience:

Overall, the quality of my graduate educational experience was high.

	Spring 2011	Summer 2011	Fall 2011	Spring 2012	Summer 2012	Fall 2012	Spring 2013	Summer 2013
Very Satisfied	30.1%	36%	32%	33%	40%	32%	35%	39%
Satisfied	60.8%	57%	62.5%	58%	45%	57%	56%	56%
Unsatisfied	6.4%	4%	4%	7%	4%	7%	7%	3%
Very unsatisfied	1.8%	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%	1%	1%
Not applicable	0	0%	0.5%	1%	0%	3%	0%	0%

UT and COGS Missions regarding quality of education.

# AY 12-13: Assessment Summary- Strengths (sample)

1. Reclassification/reorganization of COGS staff enhanced personal interactions with students, advisors and faculty for the following service type outcome categories:
  - Admissions
  - Orientation
  - Student progress and compliance
  - Graduate student development workshops, research forums
  - Graduation audits, clearances



# AY 12-13: Assessment Summary- Strengths (sample)

2. Exit survey data demonstrates that between 80- 88% of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the COGS services. This trend is sustained.
3. COGS has demonstrated strong support for Graduate students.
  - Sustained stipend/tuition scholarships
  - Graduate Student Association budget



**Does the  
evidence  
support the  
changes?**



# DATA to Inform Continuous Improvement

- Assess the proposed changes from previous academic year.
- *Do not let the data be the sole driver of creativity and good academic support service outcome development!*
- *Allow flexibility for the “aha” moments that are based on a single conversation with one stakeholder!*





**Revise the  
process and  
template as  
needed**



Q: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements about your graduate experience:

My academic program prepared me well for my professional career goals.

	Spring 2011	Summer 2011	Fall 2011	Spring 2012	Summer 2012	Fall 2012	Spring 2013	Summer 2013
Very Satisfied	33.5%	42%	35%	31%	43%	42%	35%	43%
Satisfied	55.7%	47%	54%	59%	47.5%	50%	56%	50%
Unsatisfied	8%	7%	7%	7%	6%	5%	7%	3%
Very unsatisfied	1.5%	1%	1%	1%	3.5%	2%	1%	1%
Not applicable	0%	1%	3%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%

Establish new SSO



# Informed Continuous SSOs Improvements for AY 2012-2013

- COGS Assessment template will be expanded to include services
  - Recruitment of graduate student applicants
  - Retention of students
- COGS Assessment Template will be revised to align with professional organization position statements



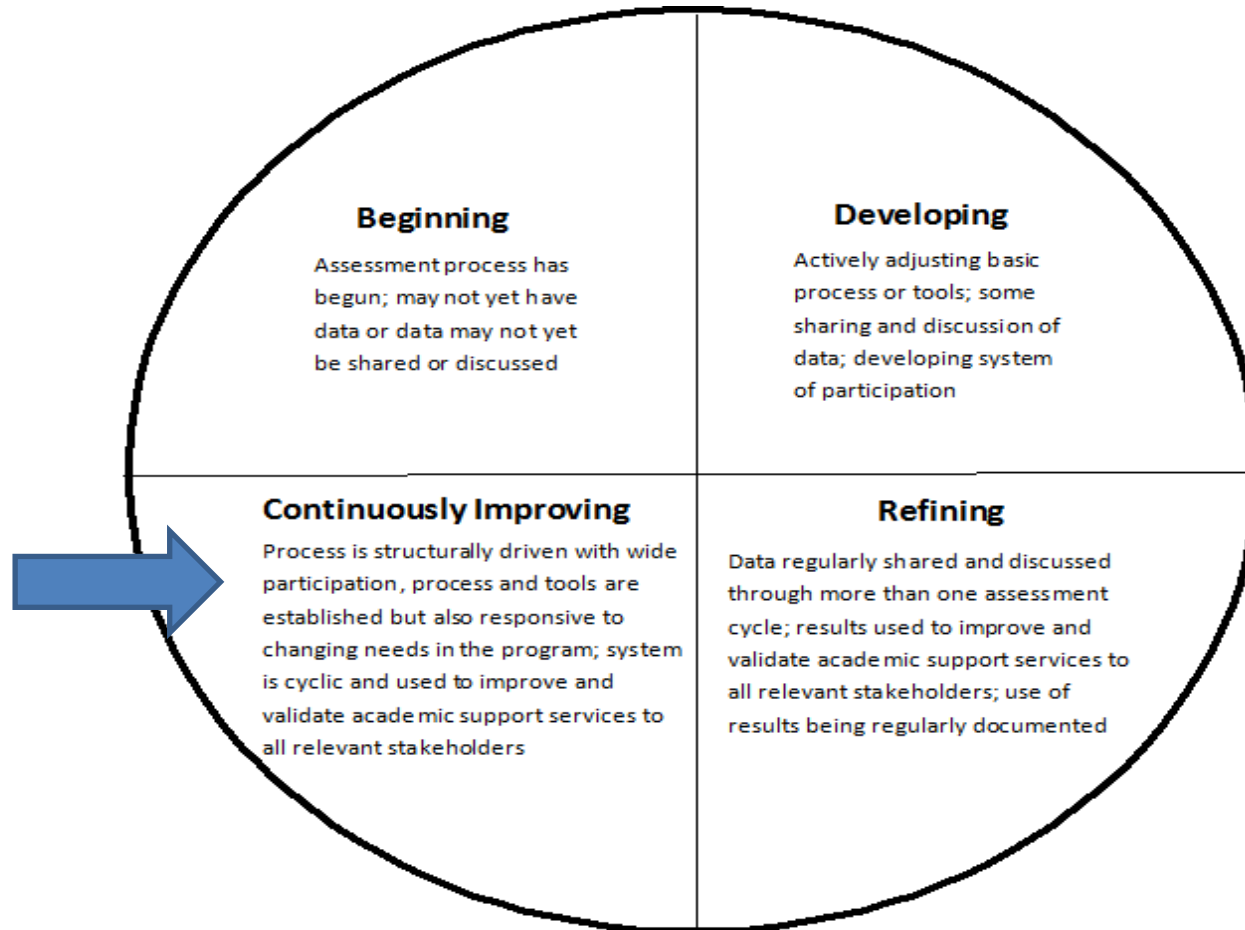
# Communication is Key to Continued Success and Improvements

Annual reports communicated to:

- UT Senior Leadership
- Graduate Council
- Graduate Student Association
- Council of Associate Graduate Deans
- Vice Provost/Dean of COGS Annual Meeting Address
- Program directors and Department Chairs
- UT UAC
- COGS web site



# Self-evaluation of COGS Assessment Process



# Program Review

- Ongoing and Cyclical (7yr)
- Graduate and Undergraduate concurrent
- Annual assessment results incorporated into self-study
- Graduate stakeholders integrated into process
  - Vice Provost Graduate Affairs/Dean COGS
  - Graduate Council
  - Graduate Faculty



# Academic Support Service Assessment Challenges

- Academic support service assessment is new to UT
- UAC predominate academic membership
  - Bias toward direct measurement metrics (SLOs)
  - Difficulty with annual evaluation of Service reports
  - Problematic development of standardized Service templates
- Focus on Undergraduate



# General Assessment Challenges

- Faculty and admin still have trouble distinguishing assessment from program review
  - Presentations to Sr. leadership, Grad council, Faculty Senate
  - Workshops to faculty
- Development of measurable outcomes
- Workload for faculty and staff to complete reports





# General Assessment Challenges

- Maintain momentum by building the culture as opposed to cyclical HLC self-study
- Minimize turnover in the leadership and support staff
- Student participation and report communication
- Identification of affordable electronic data collection tools adaptable for both SLO and Service



# Best Practice Academic Support Service Assessment

- Application of **standardized assessment template** across all UT academic and service units
  - What works? What does not work?
  - **Assessment template is a living document**
  - Develop/reinforce common language
- University Culture of Assessment
- Focus on Continuous Improvement



# Best Practice Academic Support Service Assessment

- COGS has a seat on the UAC
  - Dialogue
  - Academic units continuously learn about COGS support services
    - Break down barriers
    - Leadership in improvement of UT assessment
  - New synergies and efficiencies
    - Prevent duplication of efforts
    - Reduce cost of assessment



# Best Practice Academic Support Service Assessment

- **Leverage assessment** to adapt and survive external and internal pressures
  - Demonstrate relevance
  - Advocate for graduate students
  - Provide leadership in implementing new strategic initiatives in support service in graduate education
    - Assessment of outcomes that are more creative than simply a tally of tasks



# Leverage the Assessment Results!

- Great PR for COGS
  - Faculty, Staff and Administrator increased awareness and appreciation of ROI
- Increased collaboration between COGS and Academic Units
  - Share COGS centralized data with academic unit assessment reports
  - COGS support for program accreditation self-study
- New UT Provost prominently positioned COGS in revised UT Strategic Plan for AY13-17



# UT Revised Strategic Plan 2013

- UT will grow graduate and professional programs
- College of Graduate Studies is a portal of student entry
- Reengineer and streamline services for efficiencies and cost savings



# Conclusions

- Assessment process informs continuous improvement and leads to achievement of both UT and COGS mission and strategic plans.
- Due to the centralization of services and finances provided by COGS, the assessment of SSOs is crucial to a full assessment of UT graduate programs



# Conclusions

- Taken together, the COGS assessment process and template and its relationship with the UAC is an example of the essential role of graduate schools in improving services to graduate students and faculty in a student- and efficiency-focused research university.





# Questions?

- Presentation will be uploaded on CGS
- Contact me if you wish sample templates
  - [susan.pocotte@utoledo.edu](mailto:susan.pocotte@utoledo.edu)
- Visit our Web sites
  - <http://www.utoledo.edu/graduate/>
  - <http://www.utoledo.edu/aapr/index.html>



# Idea was to align with HLC six fundamental questions about student learning

- How are stated student learning outcomes (SLOs) appropriate to mission, program, degrees? [List SLOs](#)
- What is the evidence that students achieve SLOs? [Who measures, what is measured; When, how is evidence collected](#)
- How do you ensure shared responsibility for student learning? [Student, faculty role in assessment](#)
- In what ways do you analyze, use evidence of student learning? [Who reviews SLOs and when; Findings; Changes from findings](#)
- How evaluate and improve effectiveness of efforts to assess and improve student learning? [Changes based on findings](#)
- How inform public about what students learn and how well they learn it? [Share with stakeholders](#)