



Updates on Academic Assessment Academic Assessment Committee Report May 2025

Decennial Cycle and OLE Core Assessment

As we close out four years of our revised approach to department/program and OLE Core assessment, the Academic Assessment Committee (AAC) is taking the opportunity to reflect back on lessons learned and positive steps taken to continue to improve academic assessment at St. Olaf.

Decennial Cycle

The [Decennial Assessment Cycle](#), launched in Spring 2021, is the model that syncs departments' and programs' assessment processes with the ten-year period between their external reviews. The main goal of the Decennial Cycle is to provide more ownership over assessment to departments and programs, thereby reducing top-down or one-size-fits-all approaches. The Academic Assessment Committee has done the following in service of this goal and to educate faculty about the Decennial Cycle process:

- Under the Decennial Cycle, departments and programs determine their own assessment activities and reporting schedule within their Assessment Plans.
- The AAC partners with the Associate Deans to support progress on department/program Assessment Plans.
 - Associate Deans provide additional reminders about submitting assessment reports, which are intended to help departments and programs build towards their next external review and serve as a record of changes and improvements made in service of teaching and learning.
- The AAC has given several presentations and updates at Academic Leadership meetings, most recently at the November meeting this year which showcased concrete examples of meaningful Decennial Cycle assessment activities from several departments (these examples were also shared in the October [academic assessment report](#)).

- Interestingly, two of the three employed similar methods of artifact collection/scoring as used for OLE Core assessment and included faculty who had participated in our scoring workshops, further affirming the professional development benefits of the OLE Core assessment process we have designed.

OLE Core

Launched in the 2021-2022 academic year, the [OLE Core](#) comprises fifteen attributes that are associated with courses. After Summer 2026, we will have assessed all fifteen attributes one time each, largely with direct assessment of student artifacts collected from faculty who teach courses with the attributes. We've seen many successes over the years as we continue to improve OLE Core assessment, including:

- Year over year increases in participation rates of faculty asked to submit artifacts (Year 1: 63%, Year 2: 86%, Year 3: 93%).
- Emphasis on the importance of alignment between the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs), the scoring rubrics, and the assignments submitted for assessment. To this end, the AAC has:
 - Communicated about our findings through Academic Leadership, faculty meetings, workshops, and New Faculty Orientation
 - Posted [prompt development guidance](#) for faculty
 - Developed rubrics earlier in 2024-25 so that faculty could reference them as they designed/refined their courses and assignments (indeed, several assignments have directly referenced the rubric language in the prompt)
 - Worked with the Policy and Planning subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee to recommend CourseLeaf revisions asking for example assignment prompts addressing each ILO in new OLE Core course proposals
- Revising or reaffirming OLE Core ILOs:
 - Based on recommended changes from the summer scoring team, the faculty voted to approve revised [Social Sciences ILOs](#) in March 2024.
 - The AAC also worked proactively with faculty in Natural Sciences and Mathematics to successfully revise and reduce the number of ILOs for the [Natural Science requirement](#) prior to its assessment this year, thus streamlining the process of drafting the rubric.
 - So far, pilot scoring has revealed that assignment prompts are generally well-aligned with the revised ILOs, pointing to the benefits of engaging faculty in ILO revisions before artifacts are collected. We hope to see this bear out when scoring more artifacts this summer.

- Members of the AAC also recently met with faculty teaching in WLC (World Languages and Cultures) and QCR (Quantitative and Computational Reasoning) in anticipation of next year's assessment of these attributes. Faculty discussed the ILOs and did not suggest any revisions.
- Creative ways to collaborate on OLE Core assessment within departments:
 - Kinesiology faculty teaching Active Body courses crafted a shared reflection prompt to assess the second ILO in 2022-23; some faculty outside of this department also adapted the prompt for their use.
 - Chemistry faculty decided to “opt out” of the random ILO assignment process this year and instead submit student work as a group from their CHEM 122 and 125 lab sections that could be used to assess either of the Natural Science ILOs. This was logistically simpler given the many lab sections and different faculty instructors for each.
 - Both of these are good examples of the department-level engagement and collaboration that can emerge from adapting the OLE Core assessment process so that it works best for a particular area.

As we move into the final year of the [first cycle of OLE Core assessment](#), the AAC will be thinking about how to synthesize our assessment findings from individual attributes to describe student achievement of the learning outcomes for the OLE Core as a whole. The effective process we've built sets us up well for the second round of assessments in the coming years, where we will be able to compare how student learning has evolved and provide useful data to inform possible revisions to the OLE Core.¹

HEDS Alumni Survey

Since our last [reporting on this survey](#) for the February Board meeting, we have received the final report from the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) consortium which contains comparisons to alumni at other institutions that recently administered the survey. St. Olaf alumni generally had responses that were similar to or more positive than alumni at other institutions. Some highlights include:

- Alumni from the 5-year-out cohort were more likely than their counterparts at other institutions to report:

¹ The original resolution that established the OLE Core curriculum included a “sunset provision” that requires re-approval of or revisions to the OLE Core after ten years.

- Growth in intellectual² (74% v. 65%) and civic³ outcomes (48% v. 39%) during college
- That their college experience “very much” prepared them for graduate or professional school (55% v. 43%)
- High satisfaction with (58% v. 48%) and a very strong connection (56% v. 40%) to their undergraduate institution⁴
- Alumni from the 10-year-out cohort were more likely than their counterparts at other institutions to report:
 - That their current job requires them to use skills they gained as an undergraduate (82% v. 74%) and relates to their undergraduate major (68% v. 57%)
 - Growth in intellectual outcomes during college (75% v. 65%)
 - That their college experience “very much” prepared them for graduate or professional school (62% v. 47%)

² This indicator combined outcomes like critical and creative thinking, information literacy, problem solving, effective writing, and teamwork; percentages indicate alumni who responded “quite a bit” or “very much” to every item.

³ This indicator combined outcomes like civic engagement, intercultural knowledge, and ethical reasoning; percentages indicate alumni who responded “quite a bit” or “very much” to every item.

⁴ These comparisons focus on the upper end of their respective scales (“very satisfied” and “very strong connection”) and should not be taken to imply that remaining alumni respondents were unsatisfied or disconnected.