INTRODUCTION
What is assessment? An ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving performance. It involves:

- Making our expectations explicit
- Setting appropriate criteria and standards for quality
- Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards

A good assessment process can answer three related questions:
1. What are we trying to do?
2. How well are we doing it?
3. How are we using what we discover to improve what we will do in the future?

Why assess? Because GOOD assessment informs the teaching and learning process. Assessment information can yield useful and accurate results specific to the learning outcomes so that improvements can be made.

ASSESSMENT 101
Assessment plans include 5 parts; student learning outcomes, measures, targets, findings, and action plans.

Student learning outcomes (SLO) specify what students will be able to do or know when they graduate from the program.

Question: What three things do you want your students to be able to do or know as a result of completing the certificate? What knowledge, skills, or abilities have been gained as a result of the completing the certificate?

Precise and concrete action verbs are used to indicate the specific behavior that will be demonstrated (e.g. Bloom’s Taxonomy).

Skills and abilities are typically assessed by direct observation of student performances (oral or visual presentations). Knowledge is typically assessed using appropriate written and oral examinations.

Start here: Think critically, write well or proficiently, understand or be familiar with a particular concept, demonstrate knowledge, skill, proficiency or understanding, as well as appreciate a view point.

End here: Identify and recognize, describe and explain, solve and apply, analyze and compare, create and design, as well as judge and critique.

Measures are the means by which evidence will be collected to determine the degree to which students have met the learning outcome. The conditions you want the learning to be performed are clearly stated.

Question: What evidence can we provide to prove that students have met the SLO?
Direct measures are tangible, visible, observable, and self-explanatory. The quality and quantity of student learning is concretely exhibited.

Examples: test grades, rubrics, portfolios of student work, capstone projects, field supervisor ratings, employer ratings, and scores and pass rates on licensure exams.

Indirect measures are signs, indicators, and less convincing (tell us about...) types of evidence. The results may be consistent with student learning, but do not solicit specifics.

Examples: course grades, surveys, focus groups, course evaluations, admission to graduate school, student self-ratings, student/alumni satisfaction with learning, as well as honors, awards, and scholarships.

Objective measures require no professional judgment to score correctly, usually the result of one correct answer. Examples: multiple choice test, matching items, and true/false questions.

Subjective measures require professional judgment for scoring and allow for many possible answers of varying quality. Examples: essays, performances, and presentations.

**Targets** describe the level/degree to which the learning outcome should be achieved.

Question: At what level do you expect your students to perform?

Examples
- ____% will pass each section of the licensure test
- ____% will score 70% or better on each section of the final exam
- ____% will “Meet” or “Exceed” standard for the outcome on the assignment rubric

**Findings** are the analyzed results of each measure. They should be written in an executive summary with a link to the longer report with supporting artifacts (e.g., rubrics, scoring sheets, etc.)

Question: What does this information tell us about the student’s ability to meet the learning outcome?

**Action Plans** discuss the results regarding student achievement of the learning outcomes, reflection on their implications, and plans to use the results to improve the certificate program.

Question: With this information, how can we continue or improve on the teaching or structuring of this certificate?