Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

**Policy Type:** Administrative  
**Responsible Office:** Office of Planning and Decision Support - Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness Office  
**Initial Policy Approved:** 12/13/2013  
**Current Revision Approved:** 12/13/2013

**Policy Statement and Purpose**

The policy establishes institutional expectations for maintaining compliance with Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Compliance Standards 3.3.1.1 (Institutional Effectiveness–Educational Programs); 3.5.1 (Undergraduate Educational Programs (General Education Competencies), and the Code of Virginia (§23-9.6:1.10) as administered by the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV) in Virginia Public Higher Education Policy on the Assessment of Student Learning. [attachment A]

This policy outlines the annual assessment activities at VCU that contribute to student learning [attachment B] and the roles and responsibilities of administrators, faculty, and staff in the assessment process [attachment C].

**Noncompliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. VCU supports an environment free from retaliation. Retaliation against any employee who brings forth a good faith concern, asks a clarifying question, or participates in an investigation is prohibited.**

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Who Should Know This Policy

Vice presidents, vice provosts, deans, department chairs, and appropriate program directors and coordinators are responsible for knowing this policy and familiarizing themselves with its contents and provisions.

Definitions

Assessment
The term “assessment” has many broad uses: any process, organization, artifact, or product can be assessed. This document focuses on the assessment of student learning.

Assessment Quality Review Criteria (AQR)
The AQR is a 14-point evidence based review of a degree or certificate program’s assessment plan and practices. Evidence of meeting the standards for quality assessment is available in the assessment plans, findings, and action plans in WEAVE online. Each of the 14 points is rated on the following 3-point scale: 0=Not Compliant; 1=Needs Work; 2=Compliant

Student Learning Outcomes
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are statements of what students will know, understand, or be able to do at the end of a course or degree program. SLOs provide focus and direction for teaching and learning and they are the basis for assessing student learning at the course, program, and institutional levels.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment
The assessment of student learning outcomes refers specifically to systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our expectations then using the findings to understand and improve student learning.1

The SLO assessment process typically includes identifying goals and outcomes for student learning, establishing direct (e.g., tests) and indirect (e.g., surveys) methods to assess the achievement of outcomes, gathering and analyzing the evidence, sharing the results of the analysis, and making evidence-based improvements as needed. The assessment process continues as a cycle, reaffirming or modifying outcomes as needed.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan
The Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan, developed by faculty in all degree and certificate programs, outlines the following: mission/purpose statement, goals, student learning outcomes, curriculum map, and measures and targets. Additionally, an assessment plan provides procedural direction: how, where, and when assessments are administered; who is responsible for which tasks; and a summary of an analysis and use of the findings to maintain/improve student learning.

WEAVEonline

WEAVE is the assessment data management software for managing plans for assessing student learning. WEAVE is not assessment; it is a repository for assessment plans, findings, and action plans.

Contacts

The staff of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness (AIE) within the Office of Planning and Decision Support officially interprets this policy. AIE is responsible for obtaining approval for any revisions as required by the policy Creating and Maintaining Policies and Procedures, through the appropriate governance structures. Please direct policy questions to AIE at assessment@vcu.edu.

Procedures

1. Degree/Certificate Level Procedures and Reporting:
   - Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan:
     - Each SCHEV-approved degree and certificate program and other academic programs as appropriate will maintain in WEAVEonline a student learning outcomes assessment plan that meets Assessment Quality Review Criteria. [attachment D]
     - Assessment plans include mission/purpose statement, goals, student learning outcomes, curriculum map, and measures & targets for the outcomes. Additionally, the assessment plan provides an annual update on findings and appropriate action plans. [attachment F; I]
   - Annual Reporting: Each degree/certificate program will enter into WEAVEonline an annual assessment report (findings, analysis questions, and action plans) according to the cycle approved by the University Assessment Council. [attachment I]
   - Assessment Quality Review: Each degree and certificate program will participate in the Assessment Quality Review on a three-year cycle. [attachment E]

2. School/College Level Procedures and Reporting:
   - Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee: Schools/colleges and designated centers will assemble and maintain an assessment coordinator, committee, council, or team, as appropriate for the unit. [attachment C]
   - Annual Reporting: Each school/college/center assessment committee, council, or team will report to AIE and the University Assessment Council on the compliance and integrity of learning outcomes assessment for the programs according to the cycle approved by the University Assessment Council. [attachment G, H]
   - Assessment Quality Review: Each school/college/center assessment committee, council, or team will oversee/coordinate annual assessment activities in its unit, including the Assessment Quality Review, assessment action plans, and any assessment activities unique to that school/college/center.

3. Institutional Level Procedures and Reporting:
   - University Assessment Council: The University Assessment Council, supported by the office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness, comprises a representative from the following:
     - academic dean’s office for each school and college
     - academic centers as designated by the Office of Academic and Faculty Affairs
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- university graduate and undergraduate curriculum committees
- Center for Teaching Excellence
- Office of Vice President for Health Sciences
- Office of Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs [attachment C]
- Annual Reporting: The AIE staff will prepare an annual compliance and integrity report for the Office of Academic and Faculty Affairs according to the cycle approved by the University Assessment Council. AIE will present this report to the University Assessment Council for comment prior to submitting to Office of Vice-Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs.
- Assessment Quality Review: AIE and the University Assessment Council will annually administer the Assessment Quality Review. [attachment E]

Forms

There are no forms associated with this policy and procedures.

Related Documents

1. Attachment A: SACS/COC and SCHEV Assessment Mandates
2. Attachment B: Annual Assessment Reporting Activities
3. Attachment C: Assessment Roles & Responsibilities
4. Attachment D: Assessment Quality Review Criteria
5. Attachment E: FAQ’s - Assessment Quality Review
6. Attachment F: Assessment Plan Elements
7. Attachment G: Annual Compliance and Integrity Report
8. Attachment H: Annual Assessment Reporting Cycle
10. Resources and guides for assessing student learning outcomes are available at the AIE website.

Revision History

None – New Policy

FAQs

There are no FAQs associated with this policy and procedures.