

Policy on Student Learning Outcomes Assessment at Central Michigan University

Part I: General Policies and Principles

Student learning outcomes assessment is defined as the ongoing monitoring of the extent to which students are developing the knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes that are appropriate for graduates of the respective academic programs. Assessment of student learning assists programs in defining course goals and outcomes. Assessment data provides information for faculty development of strong programs, effective curricula, and innovative teaching. In addition, student learning outcomes assessment assists units/programs, departments, colleges and the university in accreditation by providing evidence of quality teaching and learning.

The Academic Senate supports student learning outcomes assessment as a means of understanding and improving student learning. This policy reaffirms that the senate is committed to the central role of faculty in the assessment process and allowing academic programs flexibility to choose assessment methods that will be most useful and appropriate.

A. Assessment Information and Use

Assessment information shall be used by the department/unit doing the assessment to understand and improve student learning. Assessment may be at the departmental, program or institutional level. Assessment should be based on multiple direct and indirect measures, and activities shall be designed to identify both strengths and challenges.

The assessing department/unit decides what specific student learning outcomes are measured, the instruments and procedures for assessing student learning, and the process for sharing the data with stakeholders. Within this framework, both process (how we assess) and outcomes (what we learned) are important. The assessment of student learning is expected to stimulate, as appropriate, discussions among faculty (both regular and temporary) of program learning goals, program curriculum, and pedagogy as means to improve learning.

The raw data that result from assessment activities are retained by the assessing department/unit, and inclusion of such data in reports required by any university office or body will be at the department/unit's option. The findings that result from assessment activities, and the analysis that support those findings, are to be made available to the Assessment Council, reviewing bodies, and to appropriate constituencies including students.

Student learning outcomes assessment information may not be used for personnel decisions (except for information voluntarily provided by the individual), nor shall it be the primary criterion for resource allocation decisions. Assessment information provided by individuals or programs may be used only for self-comparative purposes and may not disclose information about other individuals or other programs/units at CMU. Other uses not contemplated in this statement may be proposed to the Assessment Council (see Assessment Council charge below), which will determine whether a proposed use is to be permitted or prohibited.

B. Assessment in Programs/Units

A positive culture of assessment requires the input of multiple stakeholders, especially faculty and students. Assessment is a collaborative effort that fosters effective student learning, curriculum enhancement, program and development. A positive culture of assessment should NOT be a punitive-oriented process for students, faculty, or programs/units. Reporting of assessment activities and how information gleaned from such activities has been used to improve programs will be required by the Assessment Council and as part of other activities (e.g., accreditation) that review the quality of academic programs. Student learning outcomes that have been approved by the Assessment Council shall be made available to students and faculty. For a list of approved student learning outcomes by programs included in this policy, see <http://www.provost.cmich.edu/outcomes/>.

Department/unit program review documents will include information on student learning outcomes assessment, including the learning outcomes, the approved assessment plan, the yearly summary reports, communications from the Office of Curriculum and Assessment based on the yearly summary reports of assessment activities, the department's/unit's overall synthesis of assessment results since its last review, and the implications of those results for the unit's future plans. No other assessment-related information will be required in program review documents. Departments/units may, however, choose to include additional assessment information in their program review materials as supporting documentation.

A number of different University bodies have responsibilities in learning outcomes assessment activities. These include the faculty and staff involved in offering the programs being assessed, the departments/units responsible for the programs, the Assessment Council of the Academic Senate, the Office of Curriculum and Assessment, the deans, and the provost and president.

Part II: Departments and Units

The faculty and staff closest to the delivery of programs are responsible for assessing their programs. Departments and units are, consequently, the principal assessing bodies at Central Michigan University. Programs offered through the College of Extended Learning and/or by a distance delivery format, as well as on-campus programs, will be assessed. The Assessment Council will adjudicate in cases where there is a dispute about whether a program should be assessed or a dispute about the correct assessing unit.

A. Programs that are assessed and the assessing units are as follows:

<u>Program</u>	<u>Assessing Unit</u>
Departmental Majors, designated Minors*	Program faculty in the relevant department/unit and, where appropriate, the

	Undergraduate Education Degree Program Council
Graduate programs	Program faculty in the relevant department/unit
MSA Program	MSA Council
Interdisciplinary Programs	Appropriate Interdisciplinary Council
General Education Program (including University Program and Competency Courses)	General Education Council/General Education Subcommittee
Honors Program	Honors Council
Leadership Program	Leadership Council

* stand-alone minors and other minors as designated by the Assessment Council.

B. Assessment responsibilities of departments/units/interdisciplinary councils:

1. Develop unit assessment plans (including student learning goals and objectives, program standards and methods of measurement) and update the plans on a seven-year cycle;
2. Develop a structure within the unit (e.g., committees, coordinators) to help ensure that assessment activities will be completed in a timely manner;
3. Implement assessment activities according to established timelines (see below), which include developing an assessment plan for each program on a seven-year cycle.
4. Provide yearly summary reports on assessment activities, which need not cover all goals of the program annually, to the Office of Curriculum and Assessment (see below);
5. Review assessment plans and activities periodically to ensure that they are leading to program improvement;
6. Consider providing recognition and reward for assessment activities in department/unit by-laws, which may include credit in any of the four contractually recognized areas for personnel decisions (teaching, research, professional development, university service);

7. Provide regular feedback to department/unit faculty/staff on assessment activities, share assessment information with constituencies including students; and promote the “conversation among faculty/staff” of the implications of assessment for program improvement;
8. Provide regular feedback to students on assessment activities within departments and share with them, as appropriate, conclusions reached as a result of assessment activities;
9. Involve students in meaningful ways in assessment activities; and
10. Communicate to the Office of Curriculum and Assessment ways in which specialized accreditation requirements address assessment.

Part III: Assessment Council

The Assessment Council is a committee of the Academic Senate. The Membership and Charge are as follows.

A. Membership:

1. The Assessment Council shall be composed of 11 members:
 - Six faculty representatives, one each from the Colleges of Business Administration, Communication and Fine Arts, Education and Human Services, Health Professions, Humanities and Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Science and Technology, elected by the senate. Preference will be given to those with some expertise, experience, or interest in assessment
 - One representative of the College of Extended Learning, appointed by the Dean of CEL
 - One at large representative from any unit engaged in learning assessment, elected by the senate
 - One department chair, elected by the Council of Chairs
 - The Academic Senate Chair (or a designee appointed by the Chair from the faculty members on the Senate Executive Board)
 - The Assistant Vice President for Curriculum and Assessment or the Director for Curriculum and Assessment, *ex officio* (The Provost determines which officer shall serve)
2. Academic Senate policies on committee membership:
 - No elected member shall serve immediate successive terms on the Council. However, if a person has served on a committee for less than one-half the normal term, that member may be eligible to serve a succeeding term.

- If a member misses three consecutive meetings (excused or unexcused) of any senate committee to which that person has been appointed or elected, the member shall be dismissed from that committee and replaced.

3. Chairperson:

A chairperson of the council will be elected from among the voting members of the Council. The chair will serve a one-year term but may be reelected.

B. Charge:

1. Develop learning assessment policies for Central Michigan University and recommend those policies to the Academic Senate for approval;
2. Develop a format for departmental and unit assessment plans and a format for reviewing and approving those plans;
3. Review and approve departmental and unit assessment plans and communicate to the units on the status of those plans;
4. Review and approve changes in departmental and unit assessment plans and communicate on the status of those changes;
5. Develop a format for the yearly summary reports from departments and units on assessment activities and review communications to the units from the Office of Curriculum and Assessment based on the yearly summary reports;
6. Review and approve requests for funding by units or individuals for assessment projects and professional development activities relating to assessment;
7. Assist in developing and maintaining the presence of assessment as a defining element of Central Michigan University, including recognizing faculty and units making significant contributions to learning outcomes assessment;
8. Help ensure that conversations about student learning and program improvement remain central to departments and units;
9. Provide advice to the Office of Curriculum and Assessment, including advice on official CMU publications and reports related to assessment (e.g., reports for external accreditation agencies); and
10. Recommend to the Academic Senate a process for the comprehensive evaluation of the university's assessment plan.

Part IV: Office of Curriculum and Assessment

The Office of Curriculum and Assessment (OCA) is a unit of the Office of the Provost, staffed by the Assistant Vice President for Curriculum and Assessment and the Director for Curriculum and Assessment as well as support personnel. The responsibilities of the Office of Curriculum and Assessment include:

1. Disseminate assessment-related information to the campus community, provide expertise, and support faculty development activities related to assessment;
2. Work with campus units to coordinate, as appropriate, opportunities for gathering information about student learning (including information on student retention, persistence and graduation);
3. Develop and communicate a timetable of due dates for departments' seven-year assessment plans, working to ensure that department/unit timelines for assessment activities coordinate with timelines for their program review and specialized accreditation;
4. Work with the Assessment Council in assisting those responsible for the development of assessment plans, such as department/program assessment coordinators, to develop assessment plans and other student learning outcomes activities (e.g., identifying student learning goals and outcomes);
5. Maintain records on the status of the development, modification and implementation of assessment plans by departments/units and to disseminate information based on these records in official CMU publications, web sites and reports (e.g., reports for external accreditation agencies). The OCA will make public departmental/unit assessment plans (including student learning goals and outcomes) when they have been approved by the Assessment Council;
6. Receive and evaluate yearly summary reports of assessment activities from departments and units, according to guidelines established by the Assessment Council. Copies of the reports and the communication will be mailed to the relevant dean's office as a means for keeping the college informed of department and unit assessment efforts;
7. Report to the Academic Senate yearly through the Assessment Council on the status on learning outcomes assessment at CMU;
8. Periodically evaluate the overall effectiveness of assessment policies and practices and report the findings to the Assessment Council; and
9. Serve as a resource for campus assessment activities.

Part V: Deans

The deans and their offices have the following responsibilities in learning assessment:

1. Foster a positive culture of assessment to facilitate learning in each college through activities such as hosting college-based discussions and faculty development programs about assessment and program improvement;
2. Construct a support structure for assessment within each college, which includes providing resources to assist departments and units with assessment activities; and rewards and recognition to units, faculty, and staff for assessment efforts, including support for by-law changes which credit assessment activities; and
3. Help coordinate competing deadlines so that the due dates for seven-year assessment plans receive appropriate priority.

Part VI: Provost and President

The Offices of the Provost and President have the following responsibilities in learning assessment:

1. Communicate to the campus the importance of learning outcomes assessment and that this is an institutional priority at CMU and essential to making CMU a student-focused learning community;
2. Ensure that adequate resources, including both funds and time, are available for assessment activities; and
3. Encourage appropriate recognition and rewards for those individuals and units engaged in significant assessment activities.

Part VII: Timelines

Unit assessment plans will generally establish a seven-year cycle of assessment activities. Efforts will be made to coordinate cycle timelines with program review and accreditation schedules to reduce duplication of effort whenever possible. Annual reports on each year's activities will be submitted to the Office of Curriculum and Assessment by October 1 of each year.

Approved by Academic Senate 4/9/02; revised 2/24/04; 2/28/06.

NOTE: This policy supercedes the Policy on Student Academic Outcomes Assessment adopted 1/19/93 with revisions 4/26/94; 11/28/95; 3/11/95; 4/22/97; and 4/17/99.