

# Academic Program Assessment

According to Linda Suskie (2009), assessment is “the ongoing process of establishing clear, measurable expected outcomes of student learning; ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes; systematic gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our expectations; [and] using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning” (p. 4).<sup>1</sup>

## WHY do we do Program Assessment?

**Accountability.** One major purpose of program assessment is to ensure that your academic program (degree/certificate or minor area) is actually leading to the student learning that is expressed in your program learning outcomes.

**Continuous improvement.** Another major purpose of program assessment is to help you track and demonstrate continuous improvement in your program.

The program assessment process should help you answer the following questions:

- What are the key learning outcomes a student in this program should be achieving by the time he/she graduates?
- What evidence (i.e., student work) do we need to track to determine whether students achieved the outcomes?
- After reviewing the evidence: are students in our program actually achieving these outcomes? (In other words: *are they learning what we say we are teaching them?*)
- Should our curriculum or teaching strategies be modified to help improve student learning towards the outcomes?



<sup>1</sup> Suskie, L. (2009). *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*, 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Diagram source: <https://www.missouriwestern.edu/assessment/>

## HOW do we do Program Assessment at MSUN?

On **September 30th of each year**, the following is due for **EACH degree/minor**:

- An Assessment Report for the prior academic year.
- An Assessment Plan for the current/upcoming year. (Note: You do not need to change this every year, but do submit it every year.)

Templates, instructions, and submission directions are located on the Provost's webpage at [www.msun.edu/provost/assessment/programassessment.aspx](http://www.msun.edu/provost/assessment/programassessment.aspx).

In order to ensure feedback to faculty on the quality of their reports, as well as continuous improvement of this process at the institutional level, a faculty committee will review select reports each year and score them based on the scoring rubric provided on the program assessment webpage. This will occur on a rotating cycle.

## Relevant NWCCU Accreditation Standards (2020)

These are found at: <https://nwccu.org/accreditation/standards-policies/standards/>

1.C.1 The institution offers programs with appropriate content and rigor that are consistent with its mission, culminate in achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes that lead to collegiate-level degrees, certificates, or credentials and include designators consistent with program content in recognized fields of study.

1.C.2 The institution awards credit, degrees, certificates, or credentials for programs that are based upon student learning and learning outcomes that offer an appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning.

1.C.3 The institution identifies and publishes expected program and degree learning outcomes for all degrees, certificates, and credentials. Information on expected student learning outcomes for all courses is provided to enrolled students.

1.C.4 The institution's admission and completion or graduation requirements are clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible to students and the public.

1.C.5 The institution engages in an effective system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning in its programs. The institution recognizes the central role of faculty to establish curricula, assess student learning, and improve instructional programs.

1.C.7 The institution uses the results of its assessment efforts to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices to continuously improve student learning outcomes.