Emory University Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee
Guide for Outcomes Assessment Reports

Background:

As part of the Emory University's Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) requirements for accreditation:

- All programs and services are reviewed as part of the institutional effectiveness process
- Outcomes assessment can be achieved in a variety of ways [thus, "one size fits all" diminishes individual institutional missions]

General SASCOC Guiding Questions regarding Learning Outcomes Assessment:

- What is the role of faculty, chairs, deans, oversight committees and others in the process?
- Is the process systematic and ongoing?
- Are expected student learning outcomes clearly defined in measurable terms for each educational program?
- What types of assessment activities occur to determine whether learning outcomes are met?
- How are results from periodic assessment activities analyzed?
- How does the institution seek improvements in educational programs after conducting these analyses?
- If programs consistently report "no improvements needed," what happens?
- Were multiple assessment methods used? If so, describe.
- How has the institution's use of assessment results improved educational programs?

Rationale for Guide:

Learning Outcomes Assessment is part of the process of promoting Continuous Program Improvement and involves 5 phases: Identifying Expected Outcomes, Identifying Appropriate Ways to Measure These Outcomes, Assessing Achievement of Outcomes, Analyzing Meaning of Results, and Using Results for Improvement. This document has been created to help you develop your program's Learning Outcomes Assessment Report based on these 5 phases of continuous program improvement. Within each phase are a series of guiding questions that will help you generate your program's report.

1. **Identifying Expected Outcomes**

Suggested Guiding Questions
- Who developed the program's learning outcomes? (i.e., provide names of faculty, chairs, deans, or oversight committee members)   - What are the program-level learning outcomes?   - Do outcomes cover the depth and breadth of the program?   - Are outcomes sufficiently "SMART" (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timebound)?

- Can all outcomes be adequately measured in the course of two assessment cycles?

2. Identifying Appropriate Ways to Measure These Outcomes

Suggested Guiding Questions
- In which courses are program-level outcomes assessed? (i.e., curriculum mapping)   - What types of assessment activities occur to determine whether learning outcomes are met?   [Required] Direct methods of assessment: (e.g., assignments from individual courses, student portfolios built over the program's duration, entering student tests or assignments, capstone projects, results of common assignments, commercial tests).   [Recommended, not required] Indirect methods of assessment (e.g., course evaluations, exit surveys, retention rates, time-to-degree, licensure, completion rates, syllabi review)   - Why was the particular measure(s) chosen for each outcome? How well-aligned to the outcomes are the assessment activities?   - Are multiple methods of assessment used for each outcome?   - Are targets set for the assessments reasonable and achievable?

3. Assessing Achievement of Outcomes

Suggested Guiding Questions
- Who collects learning outcomes assessment data (e.g., faculty, chairs, deans, or oversight committee members)?   - When and how are learning outcomes assessment data collected?   - Are assessment results presented in a clear, concise manner?   - Are results aligned directly to measures and targets?

4. Analyzing Meaning of Results

Suggested Guiding Questions[1]
- Who analyzes the learning outcomes assessment data (e.g., faculty, chairs, deans, or oversight committee members)?   - Looking at the assessment results, reflect on the following questions: - What is surprising or concerning about the data?   - What, specifically, can be gleaned about student learning in the program by examining these data?   - Do the program's courses, individually and collectively, contribute to its outcomes as planned?   - How well does the program fulfill its purposes within the relevant unit?   - In what ways (if any) does the program advance school/unit and/or institution-wide goals?

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[1] Some sub-questions from Goff et al. (2015)

How do current data compare with past cycles' data? What does the longitudinal data indicate about adjustments made to the program in the past?

5. **Using Results for Improvement**

Suggested Guiding Questions[2]
- How does the program use learning outcomes assessment data: - To determine concrete action steps, including a timeline, to take to improve student learning?   - To identify areas of weakness and strength in deployment of curriculum to students?   - To discern how well the program, from its beginning to end, fosters cumulative learning toward the desired outcomes?   - To discover how well the program as a whole enables students to achieve end-point levels of competence for all program outcomes?   - To identify redundant and/or missing curricular and co-curricular elements in the program?   - Who reviews the learning outcomes assessment report? (provide names of faculty, chairs, deans, or oversight committee members)   - How are assessment results disseminated to other members of the program and/or the wider college/university community?

Please see Emory's Assessment website (provost.emory.edu/planning-administration/assessment) for examples and more tips.

Key resources:

Goff, L., Potter, M. K., Pierre, E., Carey, T., Gullage, A., Kustra, E., ... & Raffoul, J. (2015). *Learning outcomes assessment a practitioner's handbook*.

Miller, R., & Leskes, A. (2005). *Levels of assessment: From the student to the institution*. Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Commission on Colleges. (2018). *Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*. Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

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[2] Questions developed from Miller & Leskes (2005)

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