ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT GUIDELINES
(2013-2014)

INTRODUCTION

We have made significant progress in our annual assessment. For the first time, we have 92 programs that submitted their annual assessment reports in the 2012-2013 academic year. Eight-three percent have used direct measures to collect their data, and 71 percent have used the assessment results to make assessment and/or curriculum related changes.

However, the quality of these program assessment reports still varies a great deal. Many assessment reports were hard to understand. Moreover, many programs have not set any standards of performance for any of their learning outcomes. Often times, we are not sure how the departments can have the same learning outcomes for different programs (e.g. graduate and undergraduate), how a learning outcome assessed in a particular year is related to the overall assessment plan for a department, or whether the programs have followed or updated their assessment plans as needed.

The quality of program assessment data, data analysis, and data presentation also differs significantly. A few reports did not provide any data, while other data in the reports was minimal, incomplete, or unclear. Therefore, a lot of relevant data were unreported, unreliable, invalid, or not actionable.

What happens to the annual assessment of student learning outcomes at Sacramento State is consistent with the survey results from almost 3,000 (n=2809) provosts or the chief academic officers in the U.S. (Kuh and Ikenberry 2009). After Provezis reviewed all the 7 regional accreditors in 2010, she found that “all regional accreditors expect learning outcomes to be defined, articulated, assessed, and used to guide institutional improvement”, and six urged faculty to be actively involved in creating learning outcomes and plans to link assessment to improvement. However, after so many years of assessing learning outcomes, the higher education institutions are still well-short of the goals of setting minimum standards of performance for student learning, collecting reliable and valid data to demonstrate that these outcomes have been achieved (Ewell, 2008; Provezis, 2010), or using the assessment data to close the assessment loop (Banta and Blaich, 2011).

We would like to change this situation. The four assessment consultants have met many times in the last two year to figure out how to effectively read these assessment reports, double check the reliability and validity of their feedbacks, and write feedback reports. It took a great deal of additional time for the four consultants to figure out how the assessment reports answered the question in the template, what the consultants should include in these feedback reports, and how the reports and appendices in the feedbacks can be used by each program and our university to make our future annual assessment and program review better.

1. Problems/Opportunities:

Every June when academic units submit their annual assessment reports through the open-ended template, the university does not have an effective way to collect, analyze, and summarize the reports and evaluate their quality. Even though many academic units (departments/programs/colleges) have submitted the
annual assessment reports every year for the past 10 years, it is not easy for the campus and the general public to obtain meaningful assessment data about this campus. For example, it is not easy to:

1) Identify how many program learning outcomes (PLOs, see Appendix 1: Glossary for more details) each academic unit has developed and how many program learning outcomes have been assessed each year in the last 10 years;
2) Clearly present the data, and explain the results and conclusions for EACH PLO (not for each course and/or for each assessment tool) so it is easy for the faculty and the general public to understand the conclusions for each program learning outcome;
3) Compare and contrast the assessment efforts, processes, or results for a single academic unit (program, department, or college) in the last 10 years;
4) Compare and contrast the assessment efforts and results across different programs, departments, or colleges in the past 10 years;
5) Explicitly indicate where learning, assessment, and improvement take place for EACH PLO.

Our campus needs to reliably collect, analyze, and summarize this information and share it with faculty, students, the public, WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) and other accreditation agencies. Annual assessment has become an integrated part of our program review, which is a critical component of the university and WASC accreditation in 2017. We need to have data that is easy for our faculty and students to use to improve student learning and success, and for the public and accreditation agencies to understand not just for the year the data is collected, but also to track trends and progress for a long time.

2. Purpose Statements (Goals):

We understand departments’ concerns, and hope to be responsive. That’s why we have modified our annual assessment template with close- and open-ended questions to

1) Create a high-quality electronic data collection system (framework) that allows easy information gathering, analyzing, and archiving for a long-term trend study. It will enhance the abilities of the academic units and the university to collect and summarize program and university learning outcomes and their assessment efforts, processes, and results. This will increase assessment continuity, avoid confusion, and reduce workload for the faculty and staff in the academic units in the long run.
2) Collect high-quality assessment data for university programs and co-curriculum programs besides major programs, so we are able to analyze and summarize not just how major degree programs (majors) but also university programs, co-curriculum programs, and any other non-academic units (programs) work together to enhance and improve student learning and student success.
3) Provide high-quality data that would allow the university, the deans, departments, and programs (academic and non-academic) to analyze the data and provide results that can be used easily to answer many questions that are not readily obtained without this new assessment framework.
4) Help academic and other university units use historical and cross-sectional data to promote and improve our programs, and to help the general public, policy makers, WASC, and other accreditation agencies understand student learning on our campus.

3. Help Needed:

When WASC comes to visit our university in 2017, our campus needs to demonstrate where and how students have achieved their learning outcomes, including the five core competencies (critical thinking, information literacy, written communication, oral communication, and quantitative reasoning). This year’s annual assessment reports will help generate a comprehensive assessment database for the first
time. In the future, programs do not need to re-enter the learning outcomes information; they can keep previous information, and only modify or update the existing data.

**WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT to achieve these goals.** We want to make this annual assessment and its report simple, clear, and of high quality not only for this year but also for the years to come. We hope our annual assessment will be used to improve not only annual assessment and program review but also student learning and success on this campus.

**GUIDELINES**

All annual assessment reports should be submitted in electronic format (in Microsoft Word files) by the academic unit (College/Department/Program) to the College Dean for review and onward transmittal to Academic Affairs. Reports are due to the Dean’s Office no later than **July 1**. Deans will review all the reports from their college and then forward them to the Academic Affairs no later than **August 1** each year.

The 2013-2014 Annual Assessment Report Template has three parts:
- Part 1: Background Information
- Part 2: Six Questions for the 2013-2014 Annual Assessment Reports
- Part 3: Additional Assessment Information

Please directly answer the questions and make sure the answers to each question are written in a way that is easy for the general public, students, faculty, staff, and administrators to understand and to use. To ensure that these diverse readers have enough information to evaluate all parts of the report – the learning outcomes, the methods/data, the criteria/standards of performance, the interpretations, and the conclusions – please make sure you provide enough information, including the learning outcomes, sample selection (e.g., students or their work), the rubrics, data analysis and conclusions. The focus of the report is student learning outcomes for the program (PLOs), not courses or assessment tools (e.g., exams or surveys). Clarity and conciseness should be the goal. Thus, each program should clearly and concisely:

1. List the student learning outcomes (SLOs) for **EACH** program (PLO) assessed in 2013-2014.
2. Summarize the findings from student learning outcomes assessments and indicate if the desired levels of learning were achieved.
3. Describe the improvement actions taken based on findings.
4. Indicate any other significant findings from the annual assessment. Examples of possible other significant findings: commendations, description of program strengths and areas needing additional attention (if any), future program goals.

We have used appropriate WASC (Western Associate of Schools and Colleges) rubrics for guidance on effective practices in several areas, including the quality of the learning outcomes, assessment plans, methods/data/analysis, program review, and the use of assessment data for curriculum improvement, academic planning, and budgeting. These rubrics were first provided in appendices in the feedback for the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 annual assessment reports.

We hope this guideline and these appendices can be used to help a department, a program, or a college to determine the extent to which such an assessment system is in place and what additional components or processes may need to be developed or improved for the programs in the department:
Finally, we would like to thank Dr. Don Taylor (Interim Assistant Vice President, Academic Programs and Global Engagement), Janett Torset, and our student assistants (Anthony Leonardini and Huiyu Wen) for their assistance in this assessment review process.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Dr. Amy Liu (liuqa@csus.edu), Director of the Office of Academic Program Assessment. Thank you.
Appendix 1: Glossary

A glossary of terms used in this report and by WASC accreditation is provided below. As WASC points out in its most updated *Handbook of Accreditation*:

“Many of these terms have multiple meanings and/or have been used in different ways by different associations, institutions, and individuals. The definitions that follow represent the way WASC typically uses these words for purposes of institutional review and reporting. If local usage differs significantly from the definitions below, the institutions should consider translating its terms for accreditation purposes to avoid misunderstanding on the part of the evaluation term, WASC staff, and others” (WASC Handbook of Accreditation 2012:39).

To avoid misunderstanding by WASC and confusion at Sacramento State, we have decided to use the same definitions from the most updated *WASC 2013 Handbook of Accreditation* which can be located at [http://www.wascenior.org/resources/handbook-accreditation-2013](http://www.wascenior.org/resources/handbook-accreditation-2013).

**AAC&U** - the Association of American Colleges and University. Washington-based national organization dedicated to promotion of liberal learning and its integration with professional and civic education.

**Assessment** (of student learning) - an ongoing, iterative process consisting of four basic steps: 1. defining learning outcomes; 2. choosing a method or approach and then using it to gather evidence of learning; 3. analyzing and interpreting the evidence; and 4. using this information to improve student learning.

**Assessment Planning** (Institutional) - the development of a design by which an institution sets goals and objectives and identifies the means to measure their accomplishment. Institutional planning may address educational programs, support services, the physical plant, budgets and finances, and other aspects of institutional operation and future development.

**Accountability** - in higher education, being answerable to the public, e.g., students, parents, policymakers, employers. Historically, accountability has focused on financial resources; emphasis now extends to students’ academic progress, including retention, acquisition of knowledge and skills, and degree completion.

**Alignment** - connections among functions or dimensions of an institution that support achievement of goals, e.g., among curriculum, pedagogy, and expected outcomes; or priorities, planning, and resource allocation.

**Benchmark** - a point of reference or standard of excellence in relation to which something can be compared and judged. A specific level of student performance may serve as the benchmark that students are expected to meet at a particular point in time or developmental level. Retention and graduation rates may also be benchmarked against those of peer institutions or national norms.

**Capstone** – a culminating project or experience, usually associated with undergraduates but also applicable to graduate education, that generally takes place in the student’s final year of study and requires review, synthesis, and application of what has been learned over the course of the student’s college experience. The result may be a product (e.g., original research, an innovative engineering design, an art exhibit) or a performance (e.g., a recital, an internship, student teaching). The capstone can provide evidence for assessment of a range of outcomes, e.g., core competencies, general education outcomes, and institution-level outcomes, as well as those for the major or graduate degree.
CLO – see Outcome for more details.

Closing the Loop - refers to the four-step assessment cycle (see “assessment of student learning”) and the need to complete the cycle in order to improve learning. “Completing the cycle” may be understood as 1. completing step 4; or 2. completing step 4 and then repeating the cycle to see whether the changes implemented have produced the desired result.

Criterion-Referenced - testing or assessment in which student performance is judged in relation to pre-established standards and not in relation to the performance of other students.

Co-curricular Learning - learning that takes place in activities and programs that are not part of the prescribed sequence of courses in an academic program.

Culture of Evidence – a habit of using evidence in assessment, decision making, planning, resource allocation, and other institutional processes that is embedded in and characteristic of an institution’s actions and practices.

Curriculum Map - a visual representation, usually in the form of a table or matrix, that shows the alignment of course outcomes with program learning outcomes. Well-crafted curriculum maps also show development of proficiency levels, for example using terminology such as “beginning,” “intermediate,” and “advanced” or “introduced,” “developed,” and “mastered.”

Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) – a framework funded by the Lumina Foundation that describes the kinds of learning and levels of performance that may be expected of students who have earned an associate, baccalaureate, or master’s degree. Please see the following two websites for more details: http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/The_Degree_Qualifications_Profile.pdf and http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/DQPNew.html.

Direct Method - in assessment of student learning, a way of gathering evidence of learning directly, e.g., through scoring of actual student work or performances, rather than indirectly, e.g., through self-reports, surveys, etc. Direct evidence can be supplemented by indirect evidence and descriptive data.

External Validation - corroboration or confirmation through an outside source. External validation has two dimensions: 1. data from external sources may be used to confirm that something has been accurately judged and documented; and 2. external reviewers may be invited to examine the evidence. External validation can bring fresh perspectives and lend credibility. See also “external evaluator.”

Formative Assessment - assessment intended to provide feedback and support for improved performance as part of an ongoing learning process, whether at the student, program, or institution level. See also “summative assessment.”

Goal - 1. In assessment of student learning, a high-level, very general statement of learning expected of graduates, aligned with the institution’s mission, vision, and values (more specific learning outcomes are derived from goals); 2. A statement developed by an institution or program related to strategic planning, financial development, and other important issues.

High-Impact Practice (HIP): HIPs include first year seminars, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, service learning, internships, and capstone courses or projects. Research
suggests that if students experience one or more HIPS in the course of their studies, they are more likely to persist, achieve higher levels of learning, and complete their degrees.

**ILO** – see **Outcome** for more details.

**Indirect Method** - in assessment of student learning, a way to capture evidence of learning in the form of opinions—for example, of students, employers, and alumni—by means of surveys, focus groups, exit interviews, etc. Indirect evidence is mediated by personal perceptions and experiences, and learning can only be inferred. Indirect evidence may be supplemented by descriptive data.

**LEAP** - Liberal Education and America’s Promise – a project of AAC&U, the LEAP outcomes (also known as Essential Learning Outcomes) total 12, grouped under the headings “Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Natural and Physical World,” “Intellectual and Practical Skills,” “Personal and Social Responsibility,” and “Integrative and Applied Learning.”

**Mission** - in higher education, an institution’s formally adopted statement of its fundamental reasons for existence, its shared purposes and values, and the students that it aims to serve. The mission is central to decisions about priorities and strategic objectives and provides a context for WASC decisions about quality and accreditation.

**Norming** - 1. in assessment of student learning, a process of training raters to evaluate student products and performances consistently, typically using criterion-referenced standards and rubrics; 2. in accreditation, can be applied to other reviewing and rating processes, e.g. institutional evaluation, Commission actions.

**Norm-Referenced** - testing or assessment in which student performance is judged in relation to the performance of a larger group of students, not measured against a pre-established standard.

**Objective** - in assessment of student learning, a concise statement of what the instructor (or program or institution) intends a student to learn (on some campuses, objectives then lead to development of learning outcomes); 2. Sometimes used interchangeably with “outcome,” but “outcome” has become the more common usage because of its more direct focus on the result (or “outcome”) for the student; 3. in institution- or program-level planning, more specific statements derived from general goals; 4. in psychometrics, a test consisting of factual questions requiring short answers that can be reliably scored using an answer key, minimizing subjective judgments.

**OAPA** - Office of Academic Program Assessment at Sacramento State located in Library 67.

**Outcome** - in assessment of student learning, a concise statement of what the student should know or be able to do. Well-articulated learning outcomes describe how a student can demonstrate the desired outcome; verbs such as “understand” or “appreciate” are avoided in favor of observable actions, e.g., “identify,” “analyze.” Learning outcomes can be formulated for different levels of aggregation and analysis. Student learning outcomes are commonly abbreviated as SLOs, course learning outcomes as CLOs, program learning outcomes as PLOs, and institution-level outcomes as ILOs. 2. Other outcomes may address access, retention and graduation, and other indicators aligned with institutional mission and goals.

**Persistence** - like “retention,” refers to the rate at which students return to college from semester to semester and year to year, or “persist” in their education. Some educators interpret “retention” as putting
the responsibility for degree completion on the institution, whereas “persistence” puts the responsibility on the student.

PLO – see Outcome for more details.

Portfolio - in assessment of student learning, a method of collecting student work so that the evidence can be reviewed in relation to specific learning outcomes. Most student portfolios also include a reflection on the learning process. Portfolios are highly adaptable: they may be developmental (showing progress from rough draft to finished product) or cumulative (i.e., students’ “best work”); and they may be assembled at the level of the individual student, program, or institution.

Program - 1. A systematic, usually sequential, grouping of courses that forms a considerable part, or all, of the requirements for a degree in a major or professional field; 2. sometimes refers to the total educational offering of an institution.

Program Review - a systematic process of examining the capacity, processes, and outcomes of a degree program or department in order to judge its quality and effectiveness and to support improvement. Historically, program review focused primarily on capacity and research output; more recently, educational outcomes and student success have been included. While student success and assessment of learning at the program level are an important part of program review, they should not be confused with the more encompassing process of program review.

Reliability - in psychometrics and assessment of student learning, the consistency and dependability of judgments and measurements. See also “validity.”

Retention - typically refers to the rate at which students return and re-enroll in college from semester to semester and year to year; retention rates from first to second year are of particular interest, since that is when the heaviest attrition is likely to occur.

Rigor - in education, refers both to a challenging curriculum and to the consistency or stringency with which high standards for student learning and performance are upheld.

Rubric – a tool for scoring student work or performances, typically in the form of a table or matrix, with criteria that describe the dimensions of the outcome down the left-hand vertical axis, and levels of performance across the horizontal axis. The work or performance may be given an overall score (holistic scoring), or criteria may be scored individually (analytic scoring). Rubrics are also used to communicate expectations to students. 2. WASC has developed a number of rubrics to assist teams and institutions in evaluating various aspects of their curriculum and assessment processes.

Signature Assignment - an embedded assessment method using an assignment—either the identical assignment or multiple assignments all constructed according to a common template—across multiple courses or sections of courses. A sample of students’ work products is then examined using a rubric to arrive at judgments about the quality of student learning across the course, program, or institution. Alternatively, a signature question may be embedded, for example, in final exams.

SLO – see Outcome for more details.

Standard - broadly refers to statements of expectations for student learning, which may include content standards, performance standards, and benchmarks. In the K-12 arena, standards generally describe
content, but not level of mastery. In higher education, in contrast, standards generally refer to expected levels of mastery or proficiency. Not to be confused with standards of accreditation.

**Standard of Performance** - the degree of skill or proficiency with which a student demonstrates a learning outcome. WASC Standard 2, CFR 2.2a, requires institutions to report on their students’ levels of performance at or near the time of graduation in five core competencies: writing, oral communication, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and information literacy. Standards of performance are set by faculty and other educators on campus.

**Standardized** - a good practice meaning that a protocol or set of guidelines is consistently followed. For example, individuals may be trained in using scoring rubrics or conducting focus groups such that their activities are “standardized” to support the collection of reliable data. Commercially available tests are often referred to as “standardized tests,” and “standardized” has acquired negative connotations in some circles.

**Standards of Accreditation** - standards of accreditation are the principles used as a basis for judgment in accreditation reviews. WASC has four Standards that flow from three Core Commitments. They are used to guide institutions in assessing institutional performance, to identify areas needing improvement, and to serve as the basis for judgment of the institution by evaluation teams and the Senior College Commission.

**Student-Centeredness** - 1) a shift in perspective from teaching and inputs (e.g., assignments) to desired outcomes and what students actually learn; 2) an approach that places the student (the learner) at the center of the educational process by providing more curricular flexibility, more accessible services, a supportive campus climate, and so on.

**Student Success** – a phrase often used as shorthand for retention and degree completion. For WASC, student success includes quality of learning and rigor as well as retention and completion.

**Summative Assessment** - 1. assessment that occurs at the conclusion or end point of a course, program, or college experience to determine whether student learning outcomes have been achieved; 2. applied organizationally, the use of certain methods to evaluate the overall effectiveness of a program, an institution, or some element of the course of study. See also “formative assessment.”

**Sustainability** - ability of an educational institution to maintain effective functioning and improve over the long term. Assumes financial viability, but also availability of human capital and other resources, as well as vision, planning, and flexibility.

**Triangulation** - the use of multiple methods to generate more robust evidence and to see whether results converge or diverge.

**Validity** - in psychometrics and assessment of student learning, refers to how well a particular assessment method actually measures what it is intended to measure. Considerations include construct validity, content validity, and face validity. May also refer to consequences, i.e., whether an assessment has “consequential validity” and will support subsequent actions to improve learning. See also “reliability.”

**VALUE rubrics** - Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education; a set of fifteen rubrics developed by AAC&U in collaboration with hundreds of faculty to assess learning outcomes defined by the LEAP project. Institutions may download the rubrics at no cost and are encouraged to modify them to suit local needs.
Value-added - 1. in higher education, the contribution that institutions make to their students’ learning and development, documented from students’ entry to exit; 2. a WASC value, namely to promote an accreditation process that adds value to institutions and helps them to achieve their own goals.

WASC - “Western Association of Schools and Colleges” The three Commissions under the WASC umbrella: the Accrediting Commission for Schools (ACS); the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC); and the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (ACSCU), also referred to as the Senior College Commission. In the context of the 2013 Handbook, WASC refers to the Senior College Commission.
Appendix 2: Sacramento State Baccalaureate Learning Goals for the 21st Century & AAC&U’s 16 VALUE Rubrics

1. Competence in the Disciplines: The ability to demonstrate the competencies and values listed below in at least one major field of study and to demonstrate informed understandings of other fields, drawing on the knowledge and skills of disciplines outside the major.

2. Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts. Focused by engagement with big questions, contemporary and enduring.

3. Intellectual and Practical Skills, Including: inquiry and analysis, critical, philosophical, and creative thinking, written and oral communication, quantitative literacy, information literacy, teamwork and problem solving, practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance.
   3.1 Critical thinking (WASC core competency)
   3.2 Information literacy (WASC core competency)
   3.3 Written communication (WASC core competency)
   3.4 Oral communication (WASC core competency)
   3.5 Quantitative literacy (WASC core competency)
   3.6 Inquiry and analysis (Sixth VALUE rubric)
   3.7 Creative thinking (Seventh VALUE rubric)
   3.8 Reading (Eighth VALUE rubric)
   3.9 Teamwork (Ninth VALUE rubric)
   3.10 Problem solving (Tenth VALUE rubric)

4. Personal and Social Responsibility (Values), including: civic knowledge and engagement—local and global, intercultural knowledge and competence*, ethical reasoning and action, foundations and skills for lifelong learning anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges.
   4.1 Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global (Eleventh VALUE rubric)
   4.2 Intercultural knowledge and competence (Twelfth VALUE rubric)
   4.3 Ethical reasoning (Thirteenth VALUE rubric)
   4.4 Foundations and skills for lifelong learning (Fourteenth VALUE rubric)
   4.5 Global Learning (Fifteen VALUE rubric)

5. Integrative Learning **, including: synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies.
   a. Integrative and applied learning (Sixteen VALUE rubric)
   
   All of the above are demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities (values) to new settings and complex problems.

   *Understanding of and respect for those who are different from oneself and the ability to work collaboratively with those who come from diverse cultural backgrounds.

   ** Interdisciplinary learning, learning communities, capstone or senior studies in the General Education program and/or in the major connecting learning goals with the content and practices of the educational programs including GE, departmental majors, the co-curriculum and assessments.
Appendix 3: Are the WASC Core Competencies for All Levels of Education?

*Posted on Fri, Aug 16, 2013* 

So to whom do the WASC core competency standards apply? The 12th Annual Collaboration & Assessment Conference provided a forum to explore this and myriad other topics. In my general session keynote address, I described key components of the Senior College and University Commission’s new institutional review process, a process that responds both to external pressures on accreditors and to a wave of change in the larger higher education environment. One of WASC’s new requirements is that higher education institutions report on the level of student performance at graduation in five core competencies: written communication, oral communication, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and information literacy.

Post conference, there has been ample discussion on whether these core competencies also apply to graduate programs, since the section in the 2013 *Handbook of Accreditation* referring to this only indicates undergraduate programs.

The undergraduate “big five,” as I refer to these core competencies, are relevant in virtually any field of study – and also at virtually any level of study, including the graduate level. Graduate students need to be able to write in the genres of their profession and communicate orally in professional settings. Information literacy and critical thinking skills are easily folded into the ability to design and carry out research, as is quantitative reasoning, in many if not all disciplines and professions.

So although there is no WASC requirement that graduate programs measure and report proficiency in the “big five,” they offer a good point of departure for identifying, assessing, and reporting on key skills at the graduate level.

Graduate programs – and the folks who run them – should focus not on what WASC “wants” but rather on what key intellectual skills their graduates absolutely need – and how to raise graduates’ levels of performance in those areas if necessary.

Written by:  
**Dr. Barbara Wright**  
Vice President  
The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)
Appendix 4: Important Considerations for Program Review & Assessment

Please keep the following questions in mind when you (program, department, or the college) assess student learning outcomes and improve the programs:

1) What are your program learning outcomes (PLOs): what should your students know, value, and be able to do (at or near graduation)? Are the PLOs aligned closely with the missions and vision of the university and the college/department/program? Is each program learning outcome aligned closely with the curriculum, the key assignment, pedagogy, grading, the co-curriculum, or relevant student support services?

2) Is each PLO assessable? What rubrics are used to assess a particular program learning outcome? What are the explicit criteria and standards of performance for each outcome? Have you achieved the learning outcomes: the standards near or at graduation?

3) What are the data, findings, and analyses for EACH program learning outcome? What is the quality of the data: how reliable and valid is the data? Other than GPA, what data/evidences are used to determine whether your graduates have achieved the stated outcomes for the degree (BA/BS or MA/MS)? If two or more pieces of assessment data are used for each outcome, is the data consistent or contradictory?

4) Are these PLOs (together with the data and the standards of performance near or at graduation) able to demonstrate the meaning, quality, integrity and uniqueness of your degree program?

5) Who is going to use the data? Are the data, findings, or analyses clearly presented so they are easy to understand and/or use? Is the data used only for the course or for the program where the data is collected, or is the data also used broadly for the curriculum, budgeting, or strategic planning at the department, the college, or the university?

6) Are students aware of these learning outcomes? Do they often use them to assess the learning outcomes themselves? Where are the program learning outcomes published for view, e.g., across programs, with students, in the course syllabus, the department websites or catalogs? Are they widely shared?

7) Has the program conducted follow-up assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of program changes made based on assessment data? If yes, how effective are those changes to improve student learning and success? If no, what’s your plan to assess the effectiveness of those changes?

8) Is there an assessment plan for each unit (program, department, or college)? Have curriculum maps been developed? Does the plan clarify when, how, and how often each outcome will be assessed? Will all outcomes be assessed over a reasonable period of time such as within a six-year program review cycle? Is the plan sustainable in terms of human, fiscal, and other resources? Will the assessment plan be revised as needed?
### Appendix 5: WASC “Rubric for Assessing the Quality of Academic Program Learning Outcomes”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Developed</th>
<th>Highly Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Comprehensive List</td>
<td>The list of outcomes is problematic: e.g., very incomplete, overly detailed, inappropriate, and disorganized. It may include only discipline-specific learning, ignoring relevant institution-wide learning. The list may confuse learning processes (e.g., doing an internship) with learning outcomes (e.g., application of theory to real-world problems).</td>
<td>The list includes reasonable outcomes but does not specify expectations for the program as a whole. Relevant institution-wide learning outcomes and/or national disciplinary standards may be ignored. Distinctions between expectations for undergraduate and graduate programs may be unclear.</td>
<td>The list is a well-organized set of reasonable outcomes that focus on the key knowledge, skills, and values students learn in the program. It includes relevant institution-wide outcomes (e.g., communication or critical thinking skills). Outcomes are appropriate for the level (undergraduate vs. graduate); national disciplinary standards have been considered.</td>
<td>The list is reasonable, appropriate, and comprehensive, with clear distinctions between undergraduate and graduate expectations, if applicable. National disciplinary standards have been considered. Faculty has agreed on explicit criteria for assessing students’ level of mastery of each outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Assessable Outcomes</td>
<td>Outcomes statements do not identify what students can do to demonstrate learning. “Statements understand scientific method” do not specify how understanding can be demonstrated and assessed.</td>
<td>Most of the outcomes indicate how students can demonstrate their learning.</td>
<td>Each outcome describes how students can demonstrate learning, e.g., “Graduates can write reports in APA style” or “Graduate can make original contributions to biological knowledge.”</td>
<td>Outcomes describe how students can demonstrate their learning. Faculty has agreed on explicit criteria statements such as rubrics, and have identified example of student performance at varying levels of each outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Alignment</td>
<td>There is no clear relationship between the outcomes and the curriculum that students experience.</td>
<td>Students appear to be given reasonable opportunities to develop the outcomes in the required curriculum.</td>
<td>The curriculum is designed to provide opportunities for students to learn and to develop increasing sophistication with respect to each outcome. This design may be summarized in a curriculum map.</td>
<td>Pedagogy, grading, the curriculum, relevant student support services, and co-curriculum are explicitly and intentionally aligned with each outcome. Curriculum map indicates increasing levels of proficiency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Assessment Planning</td>
<td>There is no formal plan for assessing each outcome.</td>
<td>The program relies on short-term planning, such as selecting which outcome(s) to assess in current year.</td>
<td>The program has a reasonable, multi-year assessment plan that identifies when each outcome will be assessed. The plan may explicitly include analysis and implementation of improvements.</td>
<td>The program has a fully-articulated, sustainable, multi-year assessment plan that describes when and how each outcome will be assessed and how improvements based on findings will be implemented. The plan is routinely examined and revised, as needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The Student Experience</td>
<td>Students know little or nothing about the overall outcomes of the program. Communication of outcomes to students, e.g. in syllabi or catalog, is spotty or nonexistent.</td>
<td>Students have some knowledge of program outcomes. Communication is occasional and informal, left to individual faculty or advisors.</td>
<td>Students have a good grasp of program outcomes. They may use them to guide their own learning. Outcomes are included in most syllabi and are readily available in the catalog, on the web page, and elsewhere.</td>
<td>Students are well-acquainted with program outcomes and may participate in creation and use of rubrics. They are skilled at self-assessing in relation to the outcome levels of performance. Program policy calls for inclusion of outcomes in all course syllabi, and they are readily available in other program documents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 6: WASC “Rubric for Assessing the Use of Capstone Experience For Assessing Program Learning Outcomes”
(This rubric can be used with any key assignment, project, or paper)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Developed</th>
<th>Highly Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Outcomes and Lines of Evidence Identified</td>
<td>It is not clear which program outcomes will be assessed in the capstone course.</td>
<td>The relevant outcomes are identified, e.g., ability to integrate knowledge to solve complex problems; however, concrete plans for collecting evidence for each outcome have not been developed.</td>
<td>Relevant outcomes are identified. Concrete plans for collecting evidence for each outcome are agreed upon and used routinely by faculty who staff the capstone course.</td>
<td>Relevant evidence is collected; faculty have agreed on explicit criteria statements, e.g., rubrics, and have identified examples of student performances at varying levels of mastery for each relevant outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid Results</td>
<td>It is not clear that potentially valid evidence for each relevant outcome is collected and/or individual faculty use idiosyncratic criteria to assess student work or performances.</td>
<td>Faculty have reached general agreement on the types of evidence to be collected for each outcome; they have discussed relevant criteria for assessing each outcome but these are not yet fully defined.</td>
<td>Faculty have agreed on concrete plans for collecting relevant evidence for each outcome. Explicit criteria, e.g., rubrics, have been developed to assess the level of student attainment of each outcome.</td>
<td>Assessment criteria, such as rubrics, have been pilot-tested and refined over time; they usually are shared with students. Feedback from external reviewers has lead to refinements in the assessment process, and the department uses external benchmarking data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable Results</td>
<td>Those who review student work are not calibrated to apply assessment criteria in the same way; there are not checks for inter-rater reliability.</td>
<td>Reviewers are calibrated to apply assessment criteria in the same way or faculty routinely check for inter-rater reliability.</td>
<td>Reviewers are calibrated to apply assessment criteria in the same way, and faculty routinely check for inter-rater reliability.</td>
<td>Reviewers are calibrated, and faculty routinely find assessment data have high inter-rater reliability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results are Used</td>
<td>Results for each outcome may or may not be are collected. They are not discussed among faculty.</td>
<td>Results for each outcome are collected and may be discussed by the faculty, but results have not been used to improve the program.</td>
<td>Results for each outcome are collected, discussed by faculty, analyzed, and used to improve the program.</td>
<td>Faculty routinely discuss results, plan needed changes, secure necessary resources, and implement changes. They may collaborate with others, such as librarians or Student Affairs professional, to improve results. Follow-up studies confirm that changes have improved learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Student Experience</td>
<td>Students know little or nothing about the purpose of the capstone or outcomes to be assessed. It is just another course or requirement.</td>
<td>Students have some knowledge of the purpose and outcomes of the capstones. Communications is occasional, informal, left to individual faculty or advisors.</td>
<td>Students have a good grasp of purpose and outcomes of the capstone and embrace it as a learning opportunity. Information is readily available in advising guides, etc.</td>
<td>Students are well-acquainted with purpose and outcomes of the capstones and embrace it. They may participate in refining the experience, outcomes, and rubrics. Information is readily available.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 7: WASC “Rubric for Assessing the Use of Portfolio For Assessing Program Learning Outcomes”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Developed</th>
<th>Highly Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarification of Students’ Task</td>
<td>Instructio ns to students for portfolio development provide insufficient detail for them to know what faculty expect. Instructions may not identify outcomes to be addressed in the portfolio.</td>
<td>Students receive some written instructions for their portfolios, but they still have problems determining what is required of them and/or why they are compiling a portfolio.</td>
<td>Students receive written instructions that describe faculty expectations in detail and include the purpose of the portfolio, types of evidence to include, role of the reflective essay (if required), and format of the finished product.</td>
<td>Students in the program understand the portfolio requirement and the rationale for it, and they view the portfolio as helping them develop self-assessment skills. Faculty may monitor the developing portfolio to provide formative feedback and/or advise individual students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid Results</td>
<td>It is not clear that valid evidence for each relevant outcome is collected and/or individual reviewers use idiosyncratic criteria to assess student work.</td>
<td>Appropriate evidence is collected for each outcome, and faculty have discussed relevant criteria for assessing each outcome.</td>
<td>Appropriate evidence is collected for each outcome; faculty use explicit criteria, such as agreed-upon rubrics, to assess student attainment of each outcome. Rubrics are usually shared with students.</td>
<td>Assessment criteria, e.g., in the form of rubrics, have been pilot-tested and refined over time; they are shared with students, and student may have helped develop them. Feedback from external reviewers has led to refinements in the assessment process. The department also uses external benchmarking data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable Results</td>
<td>Those who review student work are not calibrated to apply assessment criteria in the same way; there are not checks for inter-rater reliability.</td>
<td>Reviewers are calibrated to apply assessment criteria in the same way or faculty routinely check for inter-rater reliability.</td>
<td>Reviewers are calibrated to apply assessment criteria in the same way, and faculty routinely check for inter-rater reliability.</td>
<td>Reviewers are calibrated, and faculty routinely find assessment data have high inter-rater reliability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results are Used</td>
<td>Results for each outcome may or may not be collected. They are not discussed among faculty.</td>
<td>Results for each outcome are collected and may be discussed by the faculty, but results have not been used to improve the program.</td>
<td>Results for each outcome are collected, discussed by faculty, analyzed, and used to improve the program.</td>
<td>Faculty routinely discuss results, plan needed changes, secure necessary resources, and implement changes. They may collaborate with others, such as librarians or Student Affairs professional, to improve results. Follow-up studies confirm that changes have improved learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If e-portfolios Are Used</td>
<td>There is no technical support for students or faculty to learn the software or to deal with problems.</td>
<td>There is informal or minimal formal support for students and faculty.</td>
<td>Formal technical support is readily available and proactively assists in learning the software and solving problems.</td>
<td>Support is readily available, proactive, and effective. Tech support personnel may also participate in refining the overall portfolio process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix 8: WASC: “Rubric for Assessing the Integration of Student Learning Assessment into Program Reviews”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Developed</th>
<th>Highly developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Required Elements of the Self-Study</strong></td>
<td>Program faculty may be required to provide a list of program-level student learning outcomes.</td>
<td>Faculty are required to provide the program’s student learning outcomes and summarize annual assessment findings.</td>
<td>Faculty are required to provide the program’s student learning outcomes, annual assessment studies, findings, and resulting changes. They may be required to submit a plan for the next cycle of assessment studies.</td>
<td>Faculty are required to evaluate the program’s student learning outcomes, annual assessment findings, benchmarking results, subsequent changes, and evidence concerning the impact of these changes. They present a plan for the next cycle of assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process of Review</strong></td>
<td>Internal and external reviewers do not address evidence concerning the quality of student learning in the program other than grades.</td>
<td>Internal and external reviewers address indirect and possibly direct evidence of student learning in the program; they do so at the descriptive level, rather than providing an evaluation.</td>
<td>Internal and external reviewers analyze direct and indirect evidence of student learning in the program and offer evaluative feedback and suggestions for improvement. They have sufficient expertise to evaluate program efforts; departments use the feedback to improve their work.</td>
<td>Well-qualified internal and external reviewers evaluate the program’s learning outcomes, assessment plan, evidence, benchmarking results, and assessment impact. They give evaluative feedback and suggestions for improvement. The department uses the feedback to improve student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning and Budgeting</strong></td>
<td>The campus has not integrated program reviews into planning and budgeting processes.</td>
<td>The campus has attempted to integrate program reviews into planning and budgeting processes, but with limited success.</td>
<td>The campus generally integrates program reviews into planning and budgeting processes, but not through a formal process.</td>
<td>The campus systematically integrates program reviews into planning and budgeting processes, e.g., through negotiating formal action plans with mutually agreed-upon commitments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual Feedback on Assessment Efforts</strong></td>
<td>No individual or committee on campus provides feedback to departments on the quality of their outcomes, assessment plans, assessment studies, impact, etc.</td>
<td>An individual or committee occasionally provides feedback on the quality of outcomes, assessment plans, assessment studies, etc.</td>
<td>A well-qualified individual or committee provides annual feedback on the quality of outcomes, assessment plans, assessment studies, etc. Departments use the feedback to improve their work.</td>
<td>A well-qualified individual or committee provides annual feedback on the quality of outcomes, assessment plans, assessment studies, benchmarking results, and assessment impact. Departments effectively use the feedback to improve student learning. Follow-up activities enjoy institutional support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Student Experience</strong></td>
<td>Students are unaware of and uninvolved in program review.</td>
<td>Program review may include focus groups or conversations with students to follow up on results of surveys.</td>
<td>The internal and external reviewers examine samples of student work, e.g., sample papers, portfolios and capstone projects. Students may be invited to discuss what they learned and how they learned it.</td>
<td>Students are respected partners in the program review process. They may offer poster sessions on their work, demonstrate how they apply rubrics to self-assess, and/or provide their own evaluative feedback.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 9: Relevant Verbs in Defining Learning Outcomes
*(Based on Bloom’s Taxonomy)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Synthesis</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cite</td>
<td>Arrange</td>
<td>Apply</td>
<td>Analyze</td>
<td>Arrange</td>
<td>Appraise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Define</td>
<td>Classify</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Appraise</td>
<td>Assemble</td>
<td>Assess</td>
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<tr>
<td>Describe</td>
<td>Convert</td>
<td>Compute</td>
<td>Break Down</td>
<td>Categorize</td>
<td>Choose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify</td>
<td>Describe</td>
<td>Construct</td>
<td>Calculate</td>
<td>Collect</td>
<td>Compare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indicate</td>
<td>Defend</td>
<td>Demonstrate</td>
<td>Categorize</td>
<td>Combine</td>
<td>Conclude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know</td>
<td>Diagram</td>
<td>Discover</td>
<td>Compare</td>
<td>Compile</td>
<td>Contrast</td>
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<tr>
<td>Label</td>
<td>Discuss</td>
<td>Dramatize</td>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>Compose</td>
<td>Criticize</td>
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<td>List</td>
<td>Distinguish</td>
<td>Employ</td>
<td>Criticize</td>
<td>Construct</td>
<td>Decide</td>
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<td>Match</td>
<td>Estimate</td>
<td>Illustrate</td>
<td>Debate</td>
<td>Create</td>
<td>Discriminate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memorize</td>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Interpret</td>
<td>Determine</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Estimate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Extend</td>
<td>Investigate</td>
<td>Diagram</td>
<td>Devise</td>
<td>Evaluate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outline</td>
<td>Generalize</td>
<td>Manipulate</td>
<td>Differentiate</td>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Explain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recall</td>
<td>Give Examples</td>
<td>Modify</td>
<td>Discriminate</td>
<td>Formulate</td>
<td>Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize</td>
<td>Infer</td>
<td>Operate</td>
<td>Distinguish</td>
<td>Generate</td>
<td>Interpret</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Locate</td>
<td>Organize</td>
<td>Manage</td>
<td>Manage</td>
<td>Judge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repeat</td>
<td>Outline</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Modify</td>
<td>Modify</td>
<td>Justify</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reproduce</td>
<td>Paraphrase</td>
<td>Predict</td>
<td>Identify</td>
<td>Organizer</td>
<td>Measure</td>
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<td>Predict</td>
<td>Prepare</td>
<td>Illustrate</td>
<td>Perform</td>
<td>Rate</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Report</td>
<td>Produce</td>
<td>Infer</td>
<td>Plan</td>
<td>Relate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Underline</td>
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<td>Schedule</td>
<td>Inspect</td>
<td>Prepare</td>
<td>Revise</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review</td>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>Inventory</td>
<td>Produce</td>
<td>Score</td>
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<td>Suggest</td>
<td>Sketch</td>
<td>Outline</td>
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<td>Select</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Solve</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Rearrange</td>
<td>Summarize</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Translate</td>
<td>Translate</td>
<td>Relate</td>
<td>Reconstruct</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use</td>
<td>Use</td>
<td>Select</td>
<td>Reorganize</td>
<td>Value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
