**September 2024**

***Program Assessment Key Reminders***

Below are some important reminders to keep in mind as you plan your program’s student learning assessment activities.

* **Ensure that your program assessment process is purposeful!** The goal of program assessment is to provide meaningful, reliable and valid feedback about the extent to which students in the program are successfully learning and meeting student learning goals and objectives. To this end, data should not be collected just for the sake of collecting data but should be collected to answer specific questions about the extent to which students are achieving program goals, and whether program decisions and changes are effective in improving educational effectiveness. In addition, program assessment data should also serve the larger purpose of answering questions about whether overarching school and university goals and mission statements are being achieved. Answering such questions depends upon the collection of reliable and valid program-level student learning assessment data.
* **Review the relevancy of program goals and objectives.** Programs should periodically review their program’s student-learning goals and objectives to make sure they reflect what they want students to know and be able to do as a result of their program experience. If program goals are not reflective of the mission of the program, and/or if objectives can not be directly measured, then it is necessary to revise them.
* **Create a plan for when and how each program goal will be assessed in a reasonable time frame.** It is important that each program goal is assessed in a reasonable timeframe to ensure that all of the program goals are being achieved. If some program goals are never assessed, then the program will not know whether they are successfully meeting those goals. In addition, it is important to plan ahead of time how each goal will be assessed so that effective assessment plans and tools can be developed to collect valid and reliable data. Please remember that objectives are the directly measurable indicators of the program goals. Direct assessment measures should be developed and implemented to measure objectives pertaining to each program goal. Attached is an assessment planning matrix that can be used to record assessment plans for program objectives. When creating effective assessment plans, please consider the following:
  + **Objectives** -- Student-learning objectives should be specific, directly measurable statements about what students in the program should know or be able to do as a result of their program experience.
  + **Assessment measures** –Objectives should be assessed with multiple and varied assessment methodsto ensure reliable and valid data. ***At least two direct assessment methods*** should be used to measure the program-level student learning objective. Direct assessment methods directly measure student’s performance. Examples include paper assignments, exams, projects, and capstone projects. Please also list any indirect assessment methods that will be used to measure each program-level student learning objective. Indirect assessment methods do not gather direct evidence but infer students’ knowledge and abilities based on student and faculty perceptions about students’ learning. Examples of indirect assessment methods include student and faculty surveys, interviews, focus groups, external reviews, course evaluation questions, and indicators of student engagement.
  + **Approximate sample size** – The group of students being assessed should be large enough to be representative of students in the program so that meaningful conclusions can be drawn about the extent to which students in the program are achieving student learning goals and objectives. For this reason it might be necessary to assess students in multiple sections of a course, or students in multiple relevant courses.
  + **Benchmarks** – It is important to set benchmarks for each objective so that there is a standard of comparison for which to determine student success in achieving an objective. For example, a benchmark could be the passing score on a test, or the description of a satisfactory or competent score on a grading rubric.
  + **Performance targets** – Performance targets determine the program’s success in meeting each objective. For each objective the program should identify the percentage of students that should achieve each objective.
  + **Rubrics/checklists** – Rubrics and checklists provide a transparent and objective way of evaluating student’s performance on an assessment. They are useful for defining benchmarks and enhancing the reliability and validity of grading procedures.
  + **Implementation schedule** – Please describe the semester and year in which the objective will be assessed, and the specific timeline for administering the assessment and analyzing the results.
  + **Action plan** – Please describe the program’s plan and timeline for reviewing findings, communicating results, and implementing and assessing program changes over time.
* **Close the assessment loop!** For an assessment process to be effective, the data being collected should answer questions about whether students are meeting program goals and objectives, and if assessment-driven changes have been effective. If students are not meeting performance targets then changes to the program should be made, and the effectiveness of those changes should be assessed. This will involve tracking students’ progress on different program objectives over time. Examples of assessment-driven changes may include changes to the program goals and/or objectives, assessment methods, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment process. This will involving tracking student progress over time on different program objectives.