Academic Program & Core Curriculum

ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK

This document is created and maintained by the
Assessment and Planning Department.

June 2014 Revision

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I. Introduction

A. ASSESSMENT PHILOSOPHY

Assessment is an enduring, cyclical process intended to be informative in nature. This process includes identifying areas of strength as well as areas that need to be improved at both the curricular and institutional level. Assessment examines how the various components of the institution function together as a whole.

At Mercyhurst University, assessment is the ongoing process of:

- Establishing clear, measurable expected outcomes of student learning.
- Ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes.
- Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our expectations.
- Using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning.” (Suskie, 2009).

The assessment of student learning focuses on the central mission of the university; it determines how well and how much our students are learning. Institutional effectiveness depends on determining if all of the components of the university are contributing to achieving the set goals. It builds upon the contributions of each program and service, especially in how they contribute to student learning. Both academic and institutional assessment are based on the assumption that, given students’ pre-college preparation and socio-demographic traits, the outcomes they can demonstrate will be affected by the environment to which they were exposed (Astin, 1970). By providing a rich, purposefully structured environment, and experiences both inside and outside of the classroom that encourage student engagement, we believe Mercyhurst may foster better outcomes than would have been expected if the students had been exposed to another environment.

At Mercyhurst, assessment activities are managed within distinct units throughout the university.

- Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment is led by the Associate Provost in the Assessment and Planning Department
- Academic Assessment is led by the VPAA but delegated accordingly:
  - Associate program assessment falls under the leadership of the Dean and faculty at the North East campus
  - Bachelor and graduate program assessment falls under the leadership of VPAA, Departmental Faculty, and Assessment Coordinator for Academic Programs
  - General Education curriculum assessment falls under the leadership of the VPAA, the Core Curriculum Advisory Committee (CCAC), and the Assessment Coordinator for Core Curriculum
These guidelines outline academic assessment protocols and apply to all academic programs, regardless of level. The General Education (Core) curriculum follows a distinct protocol, which can also be found in the handbook. Mercyhurst’s assessment efforts are summed up through the process of trying to answer the following questions:

- What should our students learn?
- What do our students learn?
- What does the evidence show and how do we respond to that evidence?

Consistent with its Catholic identity and Mercy heritage, Mercyhurst University educates women and men in a culture where faith and reason flourish together, where the beauty and power of the liberal arts combine with an appreciation for the dignity of work and a commitment to serving others. Confident in the strength of its student-faculty bonds, the university community is inspired by the image of students whose choices, in life and work, will enable them to realize the human and spiritual values embedded in everyday realities and to exercise leadership in service toward a just world.

The Assessment and Planning Department supports the vision, mission, and core values of Mercyhurst University by providing comprehensive information and reliable institutional data regarding Mercyhurst University which support the development and achievement of comprehensive University goals. APD coordinates the collection and dissemination of essential data about Mercyhurst University which inform decision making, policy making, strategic planning, mandated reporting, and academic program assessment. Additionally, APD is responsible for providing the data about the overall performance of the University; collecting data about our students and their experience of Mercyhurst University from pre-matriculation to post graduate; and analyzing, interpreting, and presenting the data to intended audiences in meaningful and accessible terms.

**Purpose**

The assessment and Planning Department provides centralized leadership and support for a variety of activities currently underway within the university and for future initiatives that share the common goal of improving student learning and institutional effectiveness. These activities relate to the assessment of mission-level, student learning, and administrative service outcomes.

**Membership**

The Assessment and Planning Department is led by Dr. Michael Lyden, Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Vice President for Enrollment Management and Strategic Planning. Responsibilities for each component of the Initiative is as follows:
• Dr. Missy Breckenridge, *Assessment Coordinator, Academic Programs* is responsible for the coordination of academic program assessment

• Dr. Dyan Jones, *Assessment Coordinator, Core Curriculum* is responsible for the coordination of general education (Core) assessment

• Dr. Gerry Tobin, *Assessment Coordinator, Co-curriculum and Administrative Departments* is responsible for the coordination of co-curricular and institutional effectiveness assessment

• Jeanette Britt, *CIO & Assoc. VP for Strategic Planning* is responsible for strategic plan evaluation

• Amy Danzer, *Director of Assessment* will provide staff support for the student learning component

• Sheila Richter, *Director of Institutional Research* will provide staff support for the mission-level and administrative service components

• Chantelle Aubry, *Assistant Director of Assessment* will provide staff support for the student learning component
II. Strategic Goals

Consistent with its mission, core values and strategic vision, Mercyhurst will continue to pursue the following strategic goals (2013-2020):

- Continue to strengthen our mission commitments, calling us to faith and reason, the liberal arts and the dignity of work, and an understanding of the spiritual and ethical dimensions of everyday activities.

- Establish a reputation for academic excellence that places Mercyhurst among the top 10 percent of all master’s universities in the nation.

- Serve as the region’s premier Opportunity College by providing students with an affordable, quality education and by demonstrating a graduation rate that is among the highest of any two-year institution in the nation.

- Offer a distinctive program of graduate and professional studies, built upon the “theory-to-practice” model, which annually attracts over 1,000 well-qualified applicants from throughout the nation.

- Be widely recognized for achieving a 95 percent student participation rate in significant hands-on learning experiences, including internships, applied research, field work, and service learning.

- Maintain a portfolio of partnership arrangements with private, non-profit, and public entities that is unrivaled among master’s universities in the region.

- Earn national recognition for operational quality and performance excellence.

- Successfully conclude a $50 million capital campaign and reach an endowment value of over $50 million.

A. KEY INITIATIVES

1) Academic Excellence

Mercyhurst has a well-established record of offering high quality academic programs that meet student demand and serve broader social and economic needs. The University will continue to introduce new programs at the associate, baccalaureate and graduate levels, with a particular focus in the areas of health and allied health, hospitality, emerging information technologies, and the environment. It will also introduce new interdisciplinary programs at all degree levels, patterned after the recently introduced concentration in Business Intelligence (which combines coursework from the Intelligence Studies and Business Management majors). All programs will reflect Mercyhurst’s unique blend of liberal arts and career-oriented coursework.
The strength of our faculty-student bonds is a central tenet of the Mercyhurst mission and represents a major element of the “value proposition” that the University presents to prospective students. Combined with excellent teaching, this distinguishing characteristic will grow in importance as the University confronts increased competition from community colleges, public universities and providers of web-based instruction.

2) **Hands-on/Engaged Learning**

Hands-on/engaged learning represents an important bridge between academic excellence and the student experience.

The hands-on, engaged approach to learning is consistent with the Mercyhurst mission in several ways. For one, the Sisters of Mercy sought to *act upon* their personal convictions by helping others to live fuller and more dignified lives. The concept of the dignity of work, derived from Catholic social teaching, also underscores the close connection between work as a cooperative act of creation and work as an expression of one’s own personal growth and development.

Hands-on/engaged learning is accomplished through such means as applied research, field work, internships, volunteer service, and study abroad. High quality experiences help students to become more actively engaged in their disciplines, to integrate what they’ve learned in extra-curricular settings with what they’ve learned in the classroom, and to acquire the types of practical knowledge and skills that these activities uniquely provide.

3) **The Student Experience**

The Mercyhurst mission statement refers to an image of students “whose choices, in life and work, will enable them to realize the human and spiritual values embedded in everyday realities”.

A well-rounded, liberal education serves as a foundation for this important, mission-level outcome. However, even the most effective education cannot, by itself, produce these hoped-for results. A student’s human and spiritual values are shaped through a variety of means that extend beyond the classroom to include their religious life, their interactions with fellow students, their involvement in extracurricular activities, and their experiences in work, service and other non-academic settings.

Consistent with the Mercy tradition of whole-person development, Mercyhurst will remain committed to providing students with an environment that not only supports their intellectual development, but their spiritual and social development as well. Mercyhurst will also ensure that residential, athletic and recreational facilities are safe and well-maintained, and that they properly accommodate students’ needs.

4) **Collaboration beyond the Campus**

Community service is central to the Mercyhurst mission, and the University has a long tradition of community outreach, civic involvement and direct support of local agencies and organizations. One of the most prominent examples of this commitment is the founding of
Mercyhurst North East, which has significantly expanded educational opportunities for Erie area residents.

With established academic programs in such fields as intelligence studies, sports medicine, nursing, public safety, education and organizational leadership, as well as recently introduced programs in allied health and public health, Mercyhurst is in a position to substantially broaden its relationships with faith-based and non-profit organizations, government agencies, and business entities.

5) **An Effective Organization**

Trustees, benefactors, alumni, staff and students, and other constituents rely on the institution’s leadership to manage its resources in ways that advance the Mercyhurst mission and accomplish important strategic and operational goals. Mercyhurst leadership will continue to provide this assurance by employing “best practice” management tools and techniques; by operating the institution in an accountable, transparent way; and by keeping constituents informed about significant institutional challenges and opportunities. It will also develop means to appropriately measure, document and communicate key student learning and development outcomes.
III. Assessment Planning Guidelines

Assessment is an ongoing, iterative process at which we will improve with time and practice. Assessment can and should be integrated into the life of the university, and as such, conducted on multiple levels – at the student, program or department, and institutional levels. Assessment at the course and academic program level must be led by the faculty with support from administration and staff. Since learning is multi-dimensional, integrated and often revealed in a student’s performance over time, multiple methods of assessing student growth at a variety of points including the beginning, middle and end of the education program are helpful, as is alumni information which provides a vital and rich perspective that is both more deeply informed and retrospective. These tenets must be balanced with the need for assessment to be cost effective both in terms of money spent and time allocated. Assessment plans and processes, as well as the proposed changes based upon their results, must be respectful of Mercyhurst’s wide academic offerings of liberal arts and professional education programs. Assessment will not be used for faculty or other employee evaluation purposes.

A. LEARNING

The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators argued for the integrated use of all of higher education’s resources in the education and preparation of the whole student in their Learning Reconsidered proposal. The document also serves as an introduction to new ways of understanding and supporting learning and development as intertwined, inseparable elements of the student experience. It advocates for transformative education – a holistic process of learning that places the student at the center of the learning experience.

The previous style of learning was informative learning or transfer of knowledge where a person with greater knowledge and experience (the teacher/educator) transferred the knowledge to the student. If the student could reiterate that knowledge in some way such as on a test, the student was said to have learned the information. In transformative learning, however, the student is at the center of the learning experience and is an active participant. Learning requires reflection of the student on an experience or new information. Following reflection, the student changes his/her perspective and meaning related to the issue and the student incorporates this change into his life. This represents an “a-ha” moment for the student.

Student Learning Outcomes

There are a variety of assessment types: assessment of needs, satisfaction assessment, outputs/services assessment, and outcomes assessment, to name a few. For our purposes and in alignment with the goals of assessment at Mercyhurst University, we use an outcomes based assessment strategy. For the educational programs and general education, this takes on the form of Student Learning Outcomes.
Definitions of Student Learning Outcomes
Concise measurable statement that specifies what students will know, be able to do or be able to demonstrate when they have completed/participated in a program/course/project or received a service. Outcomes are usually expressed as knowledge, skills or attitudes (UWF website).

Outcomes specifically describe an end result of the program/activity/service; they express what the student should know or be able to do. These outcomes must be measurable. That does not mean they must be “countable”. It must be possible to identify or observe how the students are able to do what the student learning outcome said they would be able to do as a result of the program/event/service. It must be possible to gather evidence that learning occurred. Student learning outcomes are not what the teacher is going to do to the student, but rather what the students should know or do as a result of an initiative, course, activity or service. Focus on the student, not the activity. To be measurable, (identifiable vs. countable) outcomes use active verbs such as demonstrate, articulate, illustrate, conduct, define, apply, compose, integrate, convince, create, plan, compare and summarize. Bloom’s Taxonomy is a useful tool for choosing action verbs that accurately describe a desired level of student learning.

Can I use student behavior as an outcome? It is worth mentioning a word of caution about ‘behavior’ as a student learning outcome. A great deal of research shows that there is a different between identifying/desccribing an appropriate behavior and actually carrying out that behavior. Therefore, rather than stating “students will do x behavior,” it may be more worthwhile to assess the extent to which students can define and describe that behavior. As an example, consider the idea of ethical reasoning. Instead of “students will make ethical decisions,” the student learning outcome could be rephrased as “students will apply and analyze, and discriminate between ethical behaviors.” This alternate phrasing could be measure, for example, through the presentation of a case study.

How is a Student Learning Outcome Different from Student Satisfaction? Student learning outcomes measure the actual learning of a student, whereas satisfaction assessment measures how a student feels about something. Learning is a lasting event rather than achieving immediate satisfaction. Satisfaction is defined as contentment, gratification and acceptance. Satisfaction is being content with a program or service. However, satisfaction does not indicate whether students actually learned something from the program/event/service. Measuring satisfaction can be helpful for examining the affective aspects of our interactions; however, measuring student learning helps us determine whether or not the overall mission of higher education is being accomplished – are students learning?

How can assessing Student Learning Outcomes help students and organizations? By evaluating students based on learning outcomes, organizations can determine any changes we can make to improve their programs/services to keep up with the needs of a constantly-changing student population. Further, the results of learning outcomes assessment can identify and substantiate areas of strength that can be used to promote the organization.
**Other benefits of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment:**

- Provides information for on-going departmental and organizational improvement
- Helps departments understand how to better facilitate student learning
- Provides departments with feedback (Are your services providing what they are supposed to beyond student satisfaction? What skills are students learning? Are these the skills we want them to learn? Are these the skills we are teaching them?)
- Enables students to articulate what they are learning and have learned from attending our university, outside the classroom as well as inside.
- Helps students be able to explain what they can do and what they know.
- Enables students to better understand where they can learn particular knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The following questions may help guide an organization as they work toward creating student learning outcomes and examining evidence from them.

- What general outcome are you seeking?
- How would you know the outcome if you saw it? (What will the student know or be able to do?)
- How will you help the students learn it?
- How could you measure each of the desired behaviors?
- What are the assessment findings?
- What improvements might be based on assessment findings?

**Characteristics of good Student Learning Outcomes:**

- Practical
- Measurable
- Meaningful
- Specific
- Consistent
- Sensible
- Is this going to matter in the student’s life?

The Student Learning Outcomes listed below may guide the development of well-rounded programmatic student learning outcomes. Additional information on the connections between student development can be seen in the university’s Institutional Effectiveness documents on the portal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>What Does This Mean?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complex cognitive skills</td>
<td>Reflective thought, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, intellectual flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge acquisition</td>
<td>Mastery of subject matter and application of knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrapersonal development</td>
<td>Autonomy, values, identity, aesthetics, self-esteem, maturity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal development</td>
<td>Understanding, and appreciating human differences, ability to relate to others and establishing intimate relationships with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical competence</td>
<td>Career preparation, managing one’s personal affairs (money, schedule, etc.), economic self-sufficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic responsibility</td>
<td>Responsibilities as a citizen in a democratic society and commitment to democratic ideals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B. TAXONOMIES OF LEARNING**

As in all taxonomies, a learning taxonomy presents a hierarchy of facets of learning. The original learning taxonomy by Bloom has been a focal point since its creation in 1956. Most educators are familiar with the following list: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation/creation. This is the original hierarchy presented by Bloom, but it only covers the Cognitive Domain. There are similar hierarchies for both the Affective and Psychomotor domains. The three domains are as follows:

**Cognitive**
- Evaluation/Creation
- Synthesis
- Analysis
- Application
- Comprehension
- Knowledge

**Affective**
- Characterizing
- Organizing
- Valuing
- Responding
- Receiving

**Psychomotor**
- Origination
- Adaptation
- Complex Overt Response
- Mechanism
- Guided Response
- Set
- Perception

Since the Taxonomy of Learning was first introduced, many revisions have been proposed to more accurately reflect what has been discovered through psychology, sociology, and educational research. The most notable revision was presented by Anderson in 2001. That revision, along with exemplar verbs for each dimension can be seen in the table below.
The final important note has to do with movement in the hierarchy. Though it was originally thought that learners must master one skill/level before moving to the next, we now know that students can, in fact, exist simultaneously in multiple levels. Therefore, it should not be assumed that students have mastered levels without sufficient evidence to support it. As an example, a student who is occasionally functioning as a synthesizer may not have achieved mastery of analysis.

The image below presents yet another modification to Bloom’s taxonomy. Presented is each level along with active verbs that may be useful in the creation of student learning outcomes.

![Verb Wheel Based on Bloom's Taxonomy](image)

**Table 1: Anderson’s et al (2001) Cognitive Revised Domain**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factual Knowledge</th>
<th>Remember</th>
<th>Understand</th>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Analyze</th>
<th>Evaluate</th>
<th>Create</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>List</td>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Classify</td>
<td>Order</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Combine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Knowledge</td>
<td>Describe</td>
<td>Interpret</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Assess</td>
<td>Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedural Knowledge</td>
<td>Tabulate</td>
<td>Predict</td>
<td>Calculate</td>
<td>Differentiate</td>
<td>Conclude</td>
<td>Compose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive Knowledge</td>
<td>Appropriate Use</td>
<td>Execute</td>
<td>Construct</td>
<td>Achieve</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Actualise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES
(excerpted from Dr. Jerry Standahl Office of
Assessment and Institutional Research Paul D
Camp Community College Franklin, Virginia
23851)

There are many techniques that may be used to assess student learning outcomes. In a number of cases, these assessment techniques may be embedded in course assignments or activities as measures of students’ achievement of program goals as well as their attainment of the college’s general education goals. In other cases, they may be set in programmatic experiences outside of the traditional course work. There are many techniques that may be used to assess student learning outcomes. In a number of cases, these assessment techniques may be embedded in course assignments or activities as measures of students’ achievement of program goals as well as their attainment of the college’s general education goals. In other cases, they may be set in programmatic experiences outside of the traditional course work.

Capstone Courses/Experiences
Capstone courses are designed to enable students to review, evaluate, integrate, and synthesize information and skills gained from other courses in the program or major. These courses are the optimum place to assess many program or major goals and general education goals. A capstone course is one which completing students take as a culminating experience that gives them the opportunity to tie together the knowledge and skills of other program courses. If a program requires such a course, it may be worthwhile to consider the performance in this type of capstone course as an assessment method. Likewise, some programs assign a capstone project which can be evaluated.

Internships, Field experiences, Clinical Evaluations Internships
Field or clinical experiences are also ideal for assessing many program, major and general education goals. When these occur at the end of the program or major, they often serve as capstone experiences. It is especially useful to have external experts assess the performance of the students.

Authentic Assessment
In some courses, opportunities can be found to ask students to engage in a simulation of a real-life problem that they must solve using the knowledge and skills they have gained in the course. A single project can be structured to assess both mastery of course content and attainment of program or major goals as well as certain general education goals such as communication skills, life-long learning skills, critical thinking skills, and social and education values. For example, students might be asked to assume the role of a city council member who must make a decision concerning a controversial issue. Students might then be asked to research both sides of the issue and to deliver a persuasive speech or to write an action plan.

Ill-defined or Ill-structured Problems
An ill-defined problem is one that is not highly structured and cannot be resolved with a high degree of certainty. Experts may disagree about the best solution. Examples: solving the nuclear waste storage problem or predicting the effect of global warming or deciding if there is such a thing as global warming. Dealing with ill-defined problems requires the integration of many skills, abilities, areas of knowledge. Like authentic assessments, many general education outcomes can also be assessed here.
Portfolios
An accumulation of student-produced work, a portfolio may be designed to assess a student’s attainment of program or major goals. The same portfolio may also be used to assess general education goals such as communication skills or the development of skills to enhance life-long learning, such as the ability to use the library and other appropriate sources to retrieve information. Portfolios that contain early or unrevised work as well as later or revised work can assess the growth of skill development. Rubrics to judge portfolios must be clear and shared with the student. If possible, it may be advantageous to form an Advisory Committee (perhaps of working professionals in the field) to judge the work in the portfolios using detailed criteria. Not only could this process assessed the individual student’s work in addition to indicating areas of concern for the program, it also provides the students with something tangible to take with them on job interviews to showcase their work.

Curriculum Analysis Review
This is a common assessment activity used by a number of occupational/technical programs. The Advisory Committee is particularly useful in curriculum review because they are generally practicing in the field and are aware of advances or changes. Often the advisory committee can give valuable insight by reviewing the goals and objectives to help plan future directions of a program. Tying a curriculum to a national standard may be a particularly valuable assessment technique. The advantage of using this as one aspect of a program’s assessment is that by using the advisory committee, local business/industry are getting a voice in whether the curriculum is meeting their needs. It is also an inexpensive assessment tool. However, keep in mind that although we need to be sensitive to the needs of local business and industry, it is our obligation to prepare students to work outside our service area as well as within our own region. Generally, it can be assumed that the skills and knowledge needed in a certain field in a particular region will serve a student well anywhere, but there may be instances where that does not prove to be the case.

Grades
As posted on the Carnegie Mellon assessment site: grades are often based on more than learning outcomes. Grading criteria often include behaviors or activities that are not measures of learning outcomes, such as attendance, participation, improvement, or effort. Although these may be correlated with learning outcomes, and can be valued aspects of the course, typically they are not measures of learning outcomes themselves.

Course-embedded Assessment Program
Major goals and general education goals may be assessed through assignments embedded in required courses. For example, writing assignments, such as summaries or reports, and oral presentations may be used to assess student' mastery of course content as well as their writing, reading, critical thinking or speaking skills and use of the library or other information source. With some planning, a single assignment or project can be designed to assess a number of different program or major goals as well as general education goals.
**Critical Incidents**
Students can be asked to describe an incident, either real or imagined, that illustrates or illuminates key concepts or principles. An explanation of the concepts or principles illustrated should accompany the description of the incident.

**Case Study**
Presented with a realistic example of an application in the field, students must respond with an analysis that demonstrates their mastery of course content and their ability to apply the information and skills they have learned. A case study is an examination of a specific event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group. The end product of a case study is a rich, thick description of the phenomenon being studied that illuminates the student's understanding of the phenomenon through the application of the knowledge and skills they have gained.

**Journals**
Journals or learning logs have been used in composition courses for years as a tool for increasing student writing and motivation for writing and for assessing students' writing skills. However, a journal that focuses on students’ social and educational attitudes and values may be also useful to assess students’ achievement of general education goals. Journals may also be used to assess student attainment of program or major goals.

**Writing Samples**
Writing assignments can be used as a measure of students' mastery of course content and attainment of program or major goals. Such assignments may also be used as a direct measure of the general education communication skills goal as well as an indirect assessment of critical thinking skills. Examples of writing samples include essays, research or term papers, answers to essay questions on tests, book reports, summaries, and lab reports.

**Oral Presentations/Oral Exams**
Depending on the nature and content of the course, oral presentations can be tailored not only to assess students' mastery of course content but also their attainment of general education goals such as critical thinking, general knowledge and historical consciousness, understanding the impact of science and technology, and educational and social values. Oral presentations based on course content can be used as a direct measure of students’ communication skills.

**Certification**
Tests Programs in which a student must pass a certification examination in order to be certified to work in the field, such as nursing, may want to consider using the results of that test as an assessment technique. One advantage of doing that is that successful results demonstrate credibility of the curriculum. One disadvantage is that many organizations will not disclose students’ results to the college (although individual students might).

**Exit Interviews**
There are different types of exit interviews, but they commonly fall into two categories. In one type of exit interview the program chair and students discuss topics similar to those found on student surveys. Topics can be very detailed and may result in information that a program hadn’t thought to request. Sometimes students will say things that they do not wish to put in writing. The
other type of exit interview is actually more like an oral examination. (Calling it an ‘exit interview’ has the advantage of removing the negative affective aspects associated with the term ‘oral exam’.) The interviews are conducted by a panel made up of advisory committee members. It has the advantage of giving students practice in the kind of interviews that they face for the hiring process and future promotion boards and also assess their proficiency in both oral communication and knowledge of their subject area.

**Focus Groups**
Focus groups are structured but informal discussions with small groups of students. Students may be asked about issues that are pertinent to the program. Focus groups can also be conducted with faculty, advisory committees, administrators and other employees.

**External Evaluation/Review** - This is a type of peer review where a consultant(s) from either business or another institution examines a program from an outside perspective. This may involve such things as visiting classes, interviewing faculty and students, interviewing advisory committee members, examining curriculum goals and objectives, reviewing final exams, and interviewing local business and industry. This method provides the opportunity for the exchange of ideas with a faculty member of another institution.

**Course Tests and Exams**
Common test questions drawn from course content and included on tests and exams in all sections of the course can be used to assess both program or major goals and some general education objectives. A locally developed test provides the opportunity to determine if specific desired outcomes are being successfully attained. It can be tailored to meet the objectives of the program. However, preparing a test takes a great deal of preparation and study.

**Rubrics**
For scoring consistency with longer open-ended assignments such as essays, research papers, or performances, a rubric should be developed. A rubric is a criterion-based scoring tool that specifies levels of achievement (e.g. exemplary, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory) for each dimension of the outcome. As part of the rubric, criteria are provided that describe what constitutes the different levels of achievement. There are two major types of rubrics: holistic and dimensional (analytic) also known as primary trait rubrics. Both detail the particular qualities that separate excellent from poor student work along a spectrum, but the first groups the dimensions together, while the second keeps them separate. The holistic rubric looks at the instrument as a whole; students receive one overall score based on a pre-dimension scheme used by everyone. The dimensional (analytic) rubric yields sub-scores for each dimension, as well as a cumulative score which is the sum, either weighted or un-weighted, of the dimensional scores. Each type of rubric has its strengths and weaknesses. Holistic rubrics allow for a measure of a student’s overall performance, and often it corresponds better to the grade that pops into our heads immediately after we finish looking at the student work. The dimensional (analytic) rubric provides more information about what is working and what is not. For example, perhaps students are doing a good job with learning the mechanics or writing, but not so well with learning writing development. A dimensional rubric will provide information with this level of detail, whereas a holistic rubric will not. Regardless of the type of rubric, it is important that it be shared with students well before the assessment is administered. It
is unreasonable to expect students to perform well on an assessment if they do not have a clear understanding of the standards being used to evaluate it.

Analysis of data is the next step in the assessment process. Analysis is a process that provides better understanding of data and allows inferences to be made. It summarizes the data, enhances the value of information gathered and provides direction for decisions regarding program improvement. While data analysis can be relatively complex, for the purpose of assessment it is usually basic.

This section discusses the core elements of data analysis and provides strategies for and examples of analysis. The underlying theme of this section is to illustrate how to link data to the learning outcomes and provide a basis for using data to improve student learning.

**Before analyzing data**
Two important steps should be completed before analyzing data. The first step is to review the data visually. Reviewing data has two benefits; it allows for the identification of outliers and possible mistakes, and it enables basic patterns or trends to emerge. For example, it may be clear that all students who took a particular class had difficulty with a particular outcome. The second step of the process is to determine the appropriate method for analyzing the data. This can range from simply counting the number of successful students to higher powered statistical analyses. The two key factors are first to make sure the analysis method fits the data; and second, to ensure that method aligns with the program’s needs. There are two types of data used in assessment each with different methods of analysis.

**Categorical data** are based on groupings or categories for the evaluation of student performance. For example a simple passed/failed score is categorical because there are two groups into which students can be placed. Often rubrics generate categorical data by using a scale of “exceeding expectations,” “meeting expectation,” and “failing to meet expectations”.

**Numerical data** are based on scales that reflect student performance. Tests which are scored based on the percentage of questions answered correctly generate numeric data. Direct measures can generate either categorical or numerical data. Students’ papers rated on an assessment rubric may be categorized as “meeting standard” or “failing to meet standard.” However the papers may be scored on a numerical scale indicating the overall quality of the paper with respect to the learning outcome.

**Indirect measures can** also generate either categorical or numerical data. By asking students on a questionnaire: “did you have sufficient writing in the program?” a program would compile categorical data based on those saying “yes” and those saying “no.” However, by asking students to indicate how strongly they agree with a statement like “there was sufficient writing required in my program”, numeric data could be generated by applying a Likert agreement scale. (5 – Strongly agree, 4 – Agree, 3 – Neither, 2 – Disagree, 1 – Strongly disagree).
IV. Academic Program Review

A. ASSESSMENT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

Each academic program should have a Program Assessment Plan (PLAN) in place prior to entering the Academic Program Review Process. The PLAN will be used as a basis for completing the Annual Progress Report. These yearly reports will in turn be compiled into the Self-Study in preparation for the Academic Program Review. In this way, the PLAN, the Progress Reports, and the Academic Program Review are clearly linked. Although led by the department chair, all faculty members in the department bear responsibility for the development of the Program Assessment Plan (PLAN), Progress Reports, and the Academic Program Review (including the Self-Study).

B. COMPONENTS OF A MERCYHURST PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PLAN

1) MISSION STATEMENT - Department mission should align to the University’s mission and strategic goals.

   Example – Religious Studies Department Mission Statement:

   The academic study of religion is a central component to the humanities curriculum of Mercyhurst University. Understanding the full dimension of religious experience and inquiry is integral to the human quest for meaning and value. In keeping with this principle, the Religious Studies department has constructed a series of courses aimed at developing critical thinking, creativity, compassion, and a sensitivity to justice in its students. Methodological approaches include comparative, textual-historical, constructive, and theological.

2) LEARNING GOALS & OUTCOMES - Describe program goals (e.g. all students will properly use APA style.) Link outcomes to goals in measureable terms (e.g. as assessed by a 10-page research proposal, and evaluated using a writing rubric.)

   Example – Chemistry/Biochemistry Learning Goals & Outcomes:

   Goal (1) an understanding of the fundamental concepts in chemistry.
   - Outcome (1-1) Increases test score on the American Chemical Society’s General Chemistry Exam.
   - Outcome (1-2) Applies previously learned information in new contexts and situations, including using introductory information in upper-division coursework.
   - Outcome (1-3) Demonstrates an increased score, between matriculation in the program and the term of graduation, in the four sub-disciplines of chemistry covered on the ETS Chemistry Exam (Physical, Organic, Analytical, Inorganic).

   Goal (2) the ability to plan and conduct scientific experiments, using appropriate techniques and procedures.
   - Outcome (2) Prepares for scientific experiments with appropriate background information and uses the most appropriate procedures and analytical techniques for results.
**Goal (3)** effective communication skills, including interpersonal communication (both oral and written).

**Outcome (3)** Presents scientific information in a well-organized manner and communicate in both written and oral formats.

**Goal (4)** the ability to locate and understand peer-reviewed scientific literature and critically evaluate technical information.

**Outcome (4)** Uses modern scientific literature to contribute to class discussions and to complete a research-based thesis.

**Goal (5)** the ability to recognize hazards, conduct experiments safely and to manage chemicals, including chemical wastes.

**Outcome (5)** Independently conducts scientific experiments in a laboratory using universally accepted safety protocols, under faculty supervision.

3) **Curriculum Maps** - Design a curriculum map (matrix) that represents how courses are aligned with program goals and learning outcomes. Include assessment methods, tools, and attach copies of course syllabi.

**Example – Medical Office Management Department Curriculum Map:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEDICAL OFFICE MANAGEMENT HIM CONCENTRATION Learning Outcomes (I = Introducing, D = Developing, M = Mastering)</th>
<th>SECM 111 Medical Terminology</th>
<th>HIM 100 Health Information Technology</th>
<th>HIM 201 ICD &amp; CPT Coding I</th>
<th>HIM 203 Health Insurance &amp; Reimbursement</th>
<th>HIM 204 Legal Aspects of Health Information</th>
<th>HIM 205 CPT Coding</th>
<th>HIM 206 Electronic Health Records</th>
<th>HIM 200 ICD &amp; CPT Coding II</th>
<th>SECM 275 HIM Concentration Internship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Demonstrate the ability to design, organize and implement changes in the evolution of health information to electronic formats.</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D &amp; M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Evaluate and appropriately apply principles of confidentiality and privacy congruent with the standards and ethics of the health information profession.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Apply effective skills in the areas of written and oral communication, critical thinking, and problem solving in the practice of health information management.</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Demonstrate proficiency in classifications and nomenclatures sufficient to support reimbursement in multiple patient care environments.</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>D &amp; M</td>
<td></td>
<td>D &amp; M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Demonstrate competency and skill in the technology used by the healthcare information environment.</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Demonstrate personal behaviors, attitudes and values consistent with and appropriate to the entry-level health information management professional.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I &amp; D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4) **Assessment Schedule** - Delineation of which program outcomes will be assessed/evaluated each of the four years preceding the Academic Program Review

Example – Medical Office Management Assessment Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Outcome</th>
<th>13-14</th>
<th>14-15</th>
<th>15-16</th>
<th>16-17</th>
<th>17-18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Demonstrate the ability to design, organize and implement changes in the evolution of health information to electronic formats.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HIM 100&lt;br&gt;HIM 200&lt;br&gt;SECM 275</td>
<td><strong>Self-study will be completed during the academic year.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Evaluate and appropriately apply principles of confidentiality and privacy congruent with the standards and ethics of the health information profession.</td>
<td>HIM 203&lt;br&gt;HIM 204&lt;br&gt;HIM 202&lt;br&gt;SECM 275</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Apply effective skills in the areas of written and oral communication, critical thinking, and problem solving in the practice of health information management.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SECM 111&lt;br&gt;HIM 204&lt;br&gt;SECM 275</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Demonstrate proficiency in classifications and nomenclatures sufficient to support reimbursement in multiple patient care environments.</td>
<td>HIM 101&lt;br&gt;HIM 203&lt;br&gt;HIM 200&lt;br&gt;HIM 201&lt;br&gt;SECM 275</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Demonstrate competency and skill in the technology used by the healthcare information environment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HIM 100&lt;br&gt;HIM 202&lt;br&gt;SECM 275</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Demonstrate personal behaviors, attitudes and values consistent with and appropriate to the entry-level health information management professional.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HIM 204&lt;br&gt;SECM 275</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5) **Implementation Details**

Example – Organizational Leadership Implementation Details:

a) **Data Management** - how will information/evidence be collected and shared within each department? Will the Mercyhurst portal be used? What role does Institutional Research play? (see explanation later in the document)

*Data Management*

- Learning outcomes will be assessed using a series of rubrics developed by OL graduate faculty members.
- Faculty members teaching a course assigned for assessment will use the developed rubrics to assess one student assignment in the term.
The faculty member will be responsible for reporting the results of the assessment of the assignment to the Chair of the Organizational Leadership program with a standard one page assessment, reflecting on the results in the context of the course and any future recommendations for the course based on the assessment.

The OL faculty will approve changes to the PLAN, final Annual Progress Reports, and the Academic Program Review.

The results of the assessment shall not be used in faculty teaching evaluations.

The assessment reports will be available on the shared drive.

Yearly Academic Progress Reports shall be provided to the Assessment Coordinator for Academic Programs in the Office of Academic Affairs for review.

b) Collaboration – how will results be discussed each year to determine if any changes to the PLAN should be made in time for the following year’s progress report? Summaries of yearly evaluations and action plans should be presented in the annual Progress Report and later in the Academic Program Review.

Collaboration

- Each course will have a lead faculty member assigned to it. That lead faculty member is responsible for drafting a one page assessment report in the year due on the delineated outcome.
- The Chair of the Organizational Leadership Program will be responsible for drafting the yearly Annual Progress Report, in addition to the draft Academic Program Review Self-Study document.
- All OL faculty will provide input to the Annual Progress Report at the mandatory summer faculty meeting. It is the responsibility of the OL Chair to call this meeting.
- In March 2018, a meeting of the faculty will be held to discuss the final Academic Program Review Self-Study document. This meeting will be called by the Chair of the OL Program.
- All OL faculty will be responsible for approving changes to the PLAN, in addition to approving the final Annual Progress Reports and the Academic Program Review Self-Study.

c) Roles/responsibilities – who manages data? Who evaluates outcomes? Who calls meetings? (see explanation later in the document)

Roles/Responsibilities

- One page assessment report: Assigned faculty member
- Annual Progress Report: Chair of the OL Program in consultation with OL faculty
- Academic Program Review Self-Study: Chair of the OL Program in consultation with OL faculty
- Final Approval of all OL Assessment Reports: Chair
**C. YEARLY ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES AND PROGRESS REPORTS**

**Yearly Assessment Activities** - In order to efficiently track yearly assessment efforts, chair or assessment faculty representative is requested to fill out a:
- Yearly Assessment Activity Report
- Fall Progress Report
- Annual Progress Report

Below is the program assessment timeline and examples of the *Yearly Assessment Activities, Fall Progress Report*, and *Annual Progress Report*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Suggested Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August &amp; September</td>
<td>• Provide SLOs which will undergo measurements &lt;br&gt;• Provide course title, course number, and collection semester (Fall, J-Term, or Spring) &lt;br&gt;• Provide data source measurement (assignment) &lt;br&gt;• Outline data collection procedures, including standards &lt;br&gt;• Provide assignment description(s) &lt;br&gt;• Provide fall syllabi and applicable rubric &lt;br&gt;• Submit &lt;br&gt;  - YAA Report &lt;br&gt;  - Fall syllabi &amp; rubrics to Academic Assessment Liaison NLT September 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October</td>
<td>• Create or modify measures/ tools (rubrics, tests, etc) &lt;br&gt; • Establish performance standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November &amp; December</td>
<td>• Begin, continue and complete data collection for Fall Semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January</td>
<td>• Review and verify Spring Assessment Activities with colleagues &lt;br&gt; • Evaluate student work and record data from fall &lt;br&gt; • Submit &lt;br&gt;  - Fall Progress Report &amp; Narrative &lt;br&gt;  - Action Plan (if applicable) &lt;br&gt;  - J-term syllabi &amp; rubrics &lt;br&gt;  - Spring syllabi &amp; rubrics, to Academic Assessment Liaison NLT January 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February &amp; March</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April</td>
<td>• Begin, continue and complete data collection for Spring Semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May</td>
<td>• Evaluate student work and record data &lt;br&gt; • Discuss results with department faculty &lt;br&gt; • Develop strategies to improve program based on assessment data and analysis &lt;br&gt; • Finalize the assessment report including decisions made and changes to program and budget if appropriate &lt;br&gt; • Submit &lt;br&gt;  - Annual Progress Report &amp; Narrative &lt;br&gt;  - Action Plan (if applicable) to Academic Assessment Liaison NLT May 30th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Yearly Assessment Activity Instructions

For each academic program, departments will report the following information about assessment activity in the *Yearly Assessment Activity template*:

1. Collection (Fall/J/Spring)
2. Scheduled Student Learning Outcome(s) to be assessed during the academic year.
3. The course(s) in which the outcome will be measured.
4. Data Source Measurement – assignment name and indicate source of evidence from the list below:

5. Standard or benchmark expected
6. Description of Assignment – include the description of “Data Source Measurement” indicated in step 4.
### Yearly Assessment Activity Example

#### YEARLY ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES 2013-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Organizational Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Reporting Period</td>
<td>June 1, 2013 – May 31, 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Course Undergoing SLO Measurement</th>
<th>Data Source Measurement</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Description of Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>OL SLO #1: Distinguish contemporary leadership theories and models; articulate a personal leadership philosophy; and apply appropriate models to an organizational setting.</td>
<td>OL 500: Leadership Theory &amp; Practice</td>
<td>Written assignment-Leadership Philosophy with written rubrics</td>
<td>80% of students will earn at least 83% or above for their Leadership Philosophy paper</td>
<td>In this paper you are to analyze your own personal leadership philosophy (your beliefs, values, goals and competencies). This analysis should include a discussion of your leadership philosophy using Yukl’s Causal Relationship Model of Leadership.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Fall 2013 | SLO #3 Consistently demonstrate exemplary written and oral communication, interpersonal, and presentation skills. | OL 504: Research Methods | Capstone assignment-Research Proposal with oral and written rubric | 80% of students will earn at least 83% or above on the Research Proposal | A significant product of this course is the student’s research proposal. It is our hope that this proposal may serve as the basis of the student’s required master’s degree research-based project or thesis. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>J 2014</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Course Undergoing SLO Measurement</th>
<th>Data Source Measurement</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Description of Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No data collected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spring 2014</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Course Undergoing SLO Measurement</th>
<th>Data Source Measurement</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Description of Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
<td>SLO #3 Consistently demonstrate exemplary written and oral communication, interpersonal, and presentation skills.</td>
<td>OL 500: Leadership Theory &amp; Practice</td>
<td>Written assignment-Leadership Philosophy with written rubrics</td>
<td>80% of students will earn at least 83% or above for their Leadership Philosophy paper.</td>
<td>In this paper you are to analyze your own personal leadership philosophy (your beliefs, values, goals and competencies). This analysis should include a discussion of your leadership philosophy using Yukl’s Causal Relationship Model of Leadership.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fall Progress Report Instructions

For each academic program, departments will report the following information about assessment activity in the *Fall Progress Report template*:

1. Student Learning Outcome(s) assessed during Fall.
2. The course(s) in which the outcome is measured.
3. Data Source Measurement – assignment name and indicate source of evidence from the list below:

![Assessment Summary - Add Measure](image)

- Academic Direct Measures:
  - Other Acad Dir
  - Capstone Assign
  - Comprehensives
  - Internship Eval
  - Licensure Exam
  - Performance
  - Portfolio
  - Pre/Post Test
  - Presentation
  - Project
  - Standard Test
  - Thesis/Project
  - Video/Audiotape
  - Written Assign
  - Writing Exam

- Academic Indirect Indicators:
  - Other Acad Ind
  - Advisory Board
  - Alumni Survey
  - Benchmarking
  - Curriculum
  - Employer Survey
  - Exit Interviews
  - Focus Groups
  - Graduate Accept
  - Honors/Awards
  - Placement Data
  - Satisfaction
  - School Perform
  - Student Evals
  - Transfer Accp

4. Collection frequency (Fall)
5. Standard or benchmark expected
6. Result
7. Whether the standard was met (Y or N)
8. Action Plan (Y or N). If yes, please complete Action Plan template.
9. Budget Implications (Y or N/A). If yes, please complete Budget Request Form
10. Description of Assignment – include the description of “Data Source Measurement” indicated in step 3.
### Fall Progress Report Example

#### FALL PROGRESS REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Organizational Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Reporting Period</td>
<td>September 2013 – December 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Course Undergoing SLO Measurement</th>
<th>Data Source Measurement</th>
<th>Collection (Fall)</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Standard Met (Y or N)</th>
<th>Action Plan (Y or N)</th>
<th>Budget Implications</th>
<th>Description of Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLO #1: Distinguish contemporary leadership theories and models; articulate a personal leadership philosophy; and apply appropriate models to an organizational setting.</td>
<td>OL 500: Leadership Theory &amp; Practice</td>
<td>Written Assignment-Leadership Philosophy paper with written rubrics</td>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>80% of students will earn at least 83% or above on their Leadership Philosophy paper</td>
<td>77% of students earned at least 83% or above on their Leadership Philosophy paper</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>In this paper you are to analyze your own personal leadership philosophy (your beliefs, values, goals and competencies). This analysis should include a discussion of your leadership philosophy using Yukl’s Causal Relationship Model of Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO #3 Consistently demonstrate exemplary written and oral communication, interpersonal, and presentation skills.</td>
<td>OL 504: Research Methods</td>
<td>Capstone Assignment-Research Proposal with oral and written rubric</td>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>80% of students will earn at least 83% or above on their Research Proposal</td>
<td>66% of 32 students received 83% or above on their Research Proposal</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Request to hire a part-time writing assistant to work with our OL graduate students (see Action Plan)</td>
<td>A significant product of this course is the student’s research proposal. It is our hope that this proposal may serve as the basis of the student’s required master’s degree research-based project or thesis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COMPONENTS OF ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

Assessment’s primary purpose is for internal improvement. Information collected, analyzed and reported should be accurate, even if it shows deficiencies. Findings should guide internal improvements while allowing external accountability to take place at the institutional level. Additionally, the information will provide empirical evidence to support a more strategic allocation of resources (e.g., your analysis might document the need for an additional faculty to accomplish your goals).

Process – all program faculty must be involved in the analysis of student learning evidence/data. This analysis will then be shared on the Annual Progress Report Form (see template on portal). This form, along with a Narrative and an Action Plan Form (if necessary), are then submitted to the Dean of the respective school and the Assessment Coordinator for Academic Programs. Deans review and then share reports with the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The VPAA forwards the Annual Progress Report to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee for budget considerations.

Annual Progress Report Process includes the following:

- A completed Annual Progress Report Form with Student Learning Outcome description, semester in which evidence was gathered, course undergoing SLO measurement, data source measurement, collection frequency, standard, results, action plan and assignment description;
- A Narrative, which is a more in-depth description of the data source measurement and a more detailed analysis of the outcome results; and
- If the standard was not met, departments will attach an Action Plan, detailing how the faculty intends to improve student performance in the targeted area.
Annual Progress Report Instructions

For each academic program, departments will report the following information about assessment activity in the Annual Progress Report template:

1. Student Learning Outcome(s) assessed during the academic year.
2. The course(s) in which the outcome is measured.
3. Data Source Measurement – assignment name and indicate source of evidence from the list below:

4. Collection frequency (Fall/J/Spring)
5. Standard or benchmark expected
6. Result
7. Whether the standard was met (Y or N)
8. Action Plan (Y or N). If yes, please complete Action Plan template.
9. Budget Implications (Y or N/A). If yes, please complete Budget Request Form.
10. Description of Assignment – include the description of “Data Source Measurement” indicated in step 3.
## ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Organizational Leadership</th>
</tr>
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<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>80% of students will earn at least 83% or above on their Leadership Philosophy paper</td>
<td>77% of students earned at least 83% or above on their Leadership Philosophy paper.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>In this paper you are to analyze your own personal leadership philosophy (your beliefs, values, goals and competencies). This analysis should include a discussion of your leadership philosophy using Yukl’s Causal Relationship Model of Leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO #3 Consistently demonstrate exemplary written and oral communication, interpersonal, and presentation skills.</td>
<td>OL 504: Research Methods</td>
<td>Capstone Assignment-Research Proposal with oral and written rubric</td>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>80% of students will earn at least 83% or above on their Research Proposal</td>
<td>66% of 32 students received 83% or above on their Research Proposal</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Request to hire a part-time writing assistant to work with our OL graduate students (see Action Plan) A significant product of this course is the student’s research proposal. It is our hope that this proposal may serve as the basis of the student’s required master’s degree research-based project or thesis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO #3 Consistently demonstrate exemplary written and oral communication, interpersonal, and presentation skills.</td>
<td>OL 500: Leadership Theory &amp; Practice</td>
<td>Written Assignment-Leadership Philosophy with written rubrics</td>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
<td>80% of students will earn at least 83% or above on their Leadership Philosophy paper.</td>
<td>77% of students earned at least 83% or above on their Leadership Philosophy paper.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>In this paper you are to analyze your own personal leadership philosophy (your beliefs, values, goals and competencies). This analysis should include a discussion of your leadership philosophy using Yukl’s Causal Relationship Model of Leadership.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Program Completer Outcomes: (Senior) 2013-2014

| Placement in Graduate, Professional School | 
| Placement within Major | 
| Placement outside Major | 

#### Student Accomplishments:

- Average GPA
- Study Abroad
- Internship/Practicum
- Conference Presentations
- Honors Society Membership: (Completion of MUHP)
- Prestigious Awards
- Exit Survey
- Senior Seminar/Capstone
- Professional Clinical Experience

### Yearly Enrolled Major Outcomes 2013-2014

| Student Accomplishments: | 
| Average GPA | 
| Study Abroad Placement | 
| Internship/Practicum Placement | 
| Conference/Creative Presentations | 
| Sophomore Review | 
| Honors Society Memberships Participation in MUHP | 
| Prestigious Awards | 

### Program Accreditation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Accreditation Organization</th>
<th>Date of Last Accreditation</th>
<th>Date of Next Accreditation</th>
<th>Accreditation Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IACBE</td>
<td>December 2013</td>
<td>December 2020</td>
<td>Fully accredited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Proposed Curriculum Modifications

| New Course Development | 
| Elimination of Courses/Minors | 
| Other | See Action Plan | 

### Department and/or Program Modifications

| Faculty Development | 
| Equipment/Space Needs | 
| Graduate Assistantships | 
| Program Resources | See Action Plan | Necessary, see Action Plan and Budget Request |
Action Plan Template Instructions

If a standard was not met, departments will include the following information in the Action Plan template and attach to Fall Progress Report or Annual Progress Report template:

1. Student Learning Outcome requiring follow-up action
2. Description of Action Plan
   - Summary and interpretation of assessment data collected (identification of strengths and weaknesses revealed by assessment data)
   - Description of how the assessment data were used to inform decisions about the curriculum, teaching strategies, and student learning
   - Identification of assessment questions for the next academic year
3. Projected completion date
4. Indicate priority of Action Plan (Low, Med, High)
5. Responsible person/group
6. Non-Budgetary Resource Allocation (Y or N)
7. Requested Budget Status (No request, One-time, Recurring)
   - If one-time or recurring, indicate Budget Amount Requested, and complete a Request for Additional Budget Funds
Action Plan Template Example

1) **Student Learning Outcome**

   OL SLO #3: Consistently demonstrate exemplary written and oral communication, interpersonal, and presentation skills.

2) **Description of Action Plan:**

   - Students will be introduced to more peer-reviewed journal articles across the curriculum.
   - Writing workshops will be required for students who score in the unacceptable range on their assignments across the curriculum.
   - A request to hire a part-time writing assistant to work with our OL graduate students will be submitted this year.
   - Muddiest-point in class exercise will be used several times during the course to ascertain student comprehension of research methodologies and strategies. Without a concrete understanding of these methodologies, students are unable to express themselves in writing at an appropriate graduate level.

3) Projected Completion Date: 5/30/15

4) Priority: _____ LOW  X  MED  _____ HIGH

5) Responsible Person/Group: Missy Breckenridge

6) Non-Budgetary Resource Allocation? _____ No  X Yes  (If yes, explain) introduction of more peer-reviewed journals, & muddiest point exercises

7) Requested Budget Status: ______ No request  _____ One-time  X  Recurring
   a. If one-time or recurring indicate Budget Amt. requested: 7,500 & complete a Request for Additional Budget Funds
The goal of Academic Program Review is to develop and enhance high-quality programs that are consistent with and supportive of the university’s mission and strategic plan. The process should encourage continuous improvement by highlighting department strengths; identifying areas for improvement and plans to address them; attending to the changing needs of stakeholders; and fostering cooperation and collaboration between campuses, departments, programs, and the administration. Budget allocations based on the Academic Program Review will be included in the Action Plan. Programs without outside professional accreditation will conduct an academic program review every five (5) years. Accredited programs/departments will complete the program review self-study in conjunction with their accreditation cycle. If the time between accreditation reviews is more than five years, the department will conduct a review at the mid-point between its accreditation reviews. Exceptions to this schedule may be made by OAA. Additional resources needed to undertake the review will be available through the Assessment and Planning Department (APD) and OAA.

Components of Academic Program Review

The Academic Program Review will occur every five years, with attention given to Accreditation cycles. The Program Assessment Plan (PLAN) is the foundational planning document that states the program’s mission, goals, student learning outcomes, and a timeline which indicates when evidence of student learning will be gathered.

I. Components of Self-Study

The self-study document should be no longer than 10 pages (not including appendices). The guidelines that follow are suggestive rather than prescriptive; each department may have additional information to include. Accredited programs will work with OAA to determine what information, if any, might need to be provided to supplement their accreditation report. All programs will file an Annual Progress Report.

a. Department Mission
   How do departments align and contribute to university mission?

b. Department Assessment Overview
   Is there evidence that learning goals and student learning outcomes were met at the level expected? What changes were made if goals and outcomes were not met and were these changes then successful? Was curriculum map followed? Did capstone project reflect appropriate level of discipline knowledge for graduates?

c. Faculty Profile
   Discussion of faculty profile (size, expertise, type of appointment, diversity, scholarly/research activity, external funding, and how funding relates to department goals.) Describe any programs or services (community outreach) offered by department faculty and how they involve students.
d. **Student Profile**
   - Describe and evaluate the department’s recruitment and retention strategies
   - Describe student demand for department program
   - Evaluate graduation rates, placement rates, and alumni satisfaction
   - Describe outstanding student and alumni achievements
   - Describe how the department faculty supports students in terms of communication, advising, and mentorship
   - Describe any department faculty and alumni activities
   - General Education (Core Curriculum) Support
     - (If applicable) Include General Education Core documents (from the Core Assessment)
     - (If applicable) Include any co-curricular support with and for other departments

e. **Trends in the Discipline**
   - Define and describe emerging issues and trends that may impact discipline within next evaluation cycle.
   - Explain department’s plan to address these in terms of curriculum, programs, concentrations, pedagogy, faculty expertise, resources, etc.
   - Describe how these will impact the department’s distinctiveness, demands for graduates, and future contributions in the context of the university’s mission and strategic plan

f. **Resources**
   Analyze departmental resources. Resources may include faculty, support staff, technology, classroom and office space, laboratories, equipment, libraries, etc. Describe and evaluate the adequacy of resources available to achieve the proposed goals and student learning outcomes

g. **External Review**
   The role of the external consultant is to provide an unbiased assessment of the program. The external consultant will be chosen by the department chair in conjunction with the OAA. The Assessment and Planning Department will provide funds (not to exceed $1,500 total) for travel expenses and a stipend (the dollar amount limit will be reviewed annually and adjusted upward if necessary). Most external reviews will be completed in 2-days.

Departments undergoing review should present to OAA a roster of three to five nominees from other appropriate institutions who may serve as external consultants for the review. This information should include a synopsis of their qualifications/curriculum vitae. For those programs undergoing outside accreditation, the outside accreditation team may serve as the external consultant. Prior to the site visit, the external consultant is provided with (a) copy of the program self-study, (b) additional departmental materials, (c) on-line addresses to program websites and Mercyhurst University Strategic Plan, (d) draft itinerary for the site visit, and (e) if applicable, a list of questions to be specifically addressed.
h. **Summary of Findings**
The external consultant writes a 3-5 page Summary of Findings narrative in response to the site visit and Self-Study. The Summary of Findings should address (a) evidence of student learning, (b) evidence of quality of student work (e.g., student portfolios, senior research papers/projects), (c) a report from meetings with dean, faculty, and student representatives, (d) best practices employed by the department (e.g. recruitment efforts, retention efforts, capstone requirements), (e) strengths within the program, (f) challenges within the program, (g) strategies to address the challenges, and (h) resource needs.

i. **Action Plan**
The Action Plan is a documented plan resulting from External Review-Summary of Findings. The Action Plan is prepared by the Department Chair and program faculty, with support from OAA. It outlines which outcomes should continue to be addressed during the interim years of program review cycles. The Action Plan becomes the foundation for the PLAN for the next 5-year cycle, which includes the curriculum map and any changes to the map. The Action Plan sets a timeline for implementing changes suggested by the External Review-Summary of Findings. The Action Plan will also contain a discussion of budget ramifications and any modifications to the Strategic Plan.

The Academic Program Review is the responsibility of all faculty associated with the academic program. Student involvement will range from submitting evidence of Student Learning Outcomes to participating in surveys, focus groups, and other demonstrations of student achievement.

II. **Roles and Responsibilities**

   a. **Department Chair/Program Director** is responsible for managing the process, communicating and coordinating with all involved; facilitating the preparation of the Self-Study together with all program personnel; meeting with external consultants (if appropriate); and implementing changes based on findings. Every five years the chair will receive a 3-credit reduction in his/her teaching load. With the permission of OAA, chairs can appoint a faculty member to primarily manage/coordinate the report (who would then, instead, get the 3-credit reduction).

   b. **Program Faculty/Staff** are responsible for engaging in the process, contributing input to the Self Study, gathering evidence for individual courses, meeting with external consultants, and implementing changes based on findings.

   c. **School Deans** are responsible for reviewing Annual Progress Reports and all budget requests with the VPAA on behalf of programs in their respective schools.

   d. **Office of Academic Affairs (primarily Vice President for Academic Affairs)** is responsible for developing the review schedule for all programs; facilitating the selection of the external review consultants with program faculty; reviewing all
Academic Program Review documents; meeting with external consultants and program personnel; incorporating recommendations of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee findings into budget planning; and providing support so that the next steps and expectations in the Action Plan can be achieved. The Assessment Coordinator for Academic Programs is the liaison between faculty & OAA, and OAA & the APD.

e. In conjunction with APD and OAA, the Assessment Coordinator for Academic Programs will:

- Provide assistance to faculty and staff and academic departments and programs to plan, implement and use assessment of student learning to improve educational quality;
- Consult with faculty groups and committees (APAC, Core Curriculum Committee) on all phases of assessment (e.g., planning, implementation, data analysis, reporting.);
- Support the programs under review by meeting with chairs or program directors to clarify expectations;
- Develop resource materials and provides campus presentations to help faculty and staff streamline and improve their classroom and programs assessment practices;
- If requested, assist with indirect measures of outcomes;
- Provide assessment analysis and reporting assistance if requested;
- Review yearly progress reports and provide feedback to VPAA;
- As member of Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC), review Annual Progress Reports and Requests for Additional Funds. IEC will provide recommendations to the President’s Budget committee;
- Develop and promote strategies to use university assessment results to foster educational improvement;
- Coordinate, track and project needed actions related to assessment for accreditation from the Middle States Commission.

f. Assessment and Planning Department (APD) staff is responsible for:

- Providing current longitudinal and demographic data;
- Assisting in the design, implementation and follow-up of assessment studies;
- Providing program profiles that require Datatel data-based information and dashboards;
- Assessment plan development and revision assistance if requested;
- Student learning outcome assessment – assistance, if requested, developing outcomes, building rubrics, mapping tests and assignments to outcomes, etc.

During year five of the assessment cycle, the Self-Study will be completed (see Self-Study details on previous pages.) This self-study will be submitted to the External Review Consultant no later than May 30. External reviews should take place in March of Year Five. External review consultant will submit a Summary of Findings to the VPAA, Department Chairperson, and Dean of the school within four weeks of the review. The program faculty will respond to the Summary of Findings by (a) meeting with the Dean and OAA VPAA and Assessment Coordinator for Academic Programs to discuss findings, and (b) submitting an Action Plan, which should address any recommendations. This Action Plan becomes the foundation for the
new Program Assessment PLAN (PLAN.) VPAA will incorporate findings into budget planning and resource allocation.

The Five-year cycle was established in consultation with program and department chairs. The review cycle takes into account programs with external accreditation timetables (see table below).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES</th>
<th>COLLEGE OF BACCALAUREATE STUDIES</th>
<th>COLLEGE OF ASSOCIATE STUDIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>Applied Intelligence</td>
<td>Chemistry/Biochemistry</td>
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<td>Fashion Merchandising</td>
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<td>Intelligence Studies</td>
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<td>Public Health</td>
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<td></td>
<td>World Languages – French/French Ed, Russian Studies, Spanish/Spanish Ed</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>Organizational Leadership</td>
<td>Biology</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
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<td>History</td>
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<td>Interior Design</td>
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<td>Mathematics &amp; Computer Systems – Computer Systems, Mathematic, Multimedia Technology</td>
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<td>Political Science</td>
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<td>Psychology</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2018-2019</td>
<td>Administration of Justice</td>
<td>Business – Accounting</td>
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<td>Criminal Justice</td>
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<td>Social Work</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2019-2020</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>Anthropology/Archaeology</td>
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<td>Applied Forensics</td>
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<td>Art – Art Education, Art Therapy, Graphic Design, Studio Art</td>
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<td>Athletic Training</td>
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<td>Hospitality Mgmt.</td>
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<td>Music – Music, Music Education, Performance</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2020-2021</td>
<td>Applied Behavior Analysis</td>
<td>Dance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Early Childhood Education/Special Education</td>
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<td>Geology</td>
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<td>Occupational Therapy Assistant</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Respiratory Therapist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
E. CLOSING THE ASSESSMENT LOOP
(excerpted from Marymount University website)

The “assessment loop” is closed once a program takes findings from its assessment results and implements changes based on those findings. Generally, assessment findings indicate a need to modify the assessment process or the academic program. Making any change also requires consideration of resources and developing a plan of action. The following section provides a framework for thinking about taking action to close the assessment loop.

Changes in the assessment process
When reviewing the assessment results, it is also important to evaluate the assessment process. This involves considering all aspects involved in creating the assessment report. Reviewing learning outcomes as well as approaches to gathering data will provide direction on improving the assessment process.

Measures
In addition to changing outcomes, there might be a need to change the type of data collected. If results obtained were not as expected, it is also important to know if better information could be collected to demonstrate student learning. This change could vary from modifying items on a multiple-choice test to creating a new rubric for reviewing essays, to selecting a new measure.

Data collection procedures
In addition to having the correct measures, it is also important to consider how data were collected in previous student learning assessments. Knowing who was included in the assessment data, and when data were collected are important to understanding if changes need to be made in data collection procedures.

Changes in the academic program
Results from the student learning assessment may indicate that program curricula need to be reviewed and adjusted. Mapping learning outcomes to the curriculum is the first step to understanding if changes are necessary. Changing how concepts are introduced and the timing of that introduction to students are two common findings from student learning assessments.

Mapping outcomes to the curriculum
Results may indicate a need to understand where students are introduced to concepts defined in the learning outcomes. Mapping learning outcomes to program courses is the first step in understanding where students are introduced to the material they need to master.

Examining concept reinforcement
Often programs will discover that students are introduced to the concept in the curriculum, but course assignments and planned experiences are not sufficient to help students master those concepts. This may lead to considering modifications in assignments, readings, or general teaching
approaches to reinforce concepts with students. A program may also discover that a new course needs to be created to sufficiently address a learning outcome.

**Examining course sequencing**
Sometimes faculty will discover that the course provides sufficient support for the student to master the material, but course sequencing should be adjusted so that students are introduced to concepts that build on and complement each other. The student learning assessment process can be used as an audit of the programmatic educational experience.

**Assessing the Assessment**
Each year at our Pre-Summer Assessment Institute, the faculty will not only interpret the assessment data collected that year, they will also examine our processes through reflective inquiry. Were student learning outcomes (SLOs) stated in measurable language and related to the program mission? Were the data sources and measurements appropriate for the stated SLO? Were standards set and results reported? Did the summary and interpretation of results provide information on strengths and weaknesses of the level of student learning? How do we plan to use the data to improve learning and teaching? If change is necessary to improve student learning, is there an Action Plan? Will there be any budget requests associated with the Action Plan? Additionally, as faculty become more practiced at the art of assessment, are we providing appropriate and adequate training?

These issues will be reported on an Academic Program Reflection rubric, which will be submitted to the Academic Planning and Assessment Committee (APAC) for further analysis. APAC will provide a summary report to the Assessment and Planning Department and to the VPAA.
V. Core Curriculum Assessment

A. ASSESSMENT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE CORE CURRICULUM

Just as each academic program area should have a well-planned assessment program, the Core Curriculum also must be assessed. A series of Student Learning Outcomes have been created to encompass the educational intentions of the Mercyhurst Core Curriculum, and procedures have been created to assess those student learning outcomes and use the results of assessment appropriately. The assessment of the Core is led by the Coordinator for Core Assessment under the advisement of the Office for Academic Affairs. The Coordinator will bear responsibility for organizing and overseeing the implementation of the assessment, and also for creating the yearly progress reports and the semi-annual Core Curriculum Review.

The guide that follows is meant to provide faculty with an overview of the process that has been created to assess the Core Curriculum and to describe the important role of the faculty and staff in this assessment process.

B. MISSION AND STRUCTURE OF THE CORE CURRICULUM

The General Education Curriculum is meant to compliment the student’s specific major by providing an essential, coherent, and comprehensive experience in general education. The General Education Curriculum is designed to develop a variety of transferrable skills in students, to provide students with a wide range of human knowledge and understanding, and to help the student better understand oneself and those values that are important in developing compassion and understanding for others. The General Education Curriculum at Mercyhurst University (the Core Curriculum) provides the intellectual and spiritual foundation for a lifetime of continuous learning and labor. The Mercyhurst Core Curriculum is designed to provide the students with the opportunity to grow in knowledge and understanding of themselves and of the world around them, enabling them to respond to the challenges of the complex world into which they graduate. This knowledge encompasses an understanding of our past, the present and a vision of the future. It also provides the student with the opportunities to examine their moral and religious beliefs and convictions.

The overall order of studies at Mercyhurst University encourages holistic education, especially by nurturing active learning, critical thinking, effective communication, global awareness and moral understanding. Through these actions, Mercyhurst University Core Curriculum strives to form the intellectual basis and cognitive skills for development of the habit of learning and adaptation that are widely applicable to a broad range of opportunities presented to the graduate. The focus of the Core Curriculum is, therefore, on the development of the intellectual and spiritual person with transferrable skills; well-developed methods of inquiry; and
critical, analytical and synthetic reasoning within the broad conceptual frames of reference including the past, present, and future.

The current structure was approved by the Board of Trustees of Mercyhurst University in the Spring of 2012. The 2012-2013 academic year was therefore filled with the administrative work of filling the core areas with courses and preparing for the change in requirements.

All courses approved for any Academic Core Area were required to undergo an application process that required documentation of (a) Student Learning Outcomes, (b) learning objectives, and (c) assessment methods.

These courses, though often rooted in particular disciplines, represent a unity of foundational knowledge, essential skills, and Mercyhurst’s mission-centered values. This combination is essential for success in University, in the work world, and for producing enlightened citizens. To the degree appropriate, Mercyhurst has a core that allows individual students and programs to tailor their completion in the manner most effective to their course of study and most meaningful for them.

The current structure of the Core Curriculum was a faculty-driven effort and the result of many years of work by committees across the academic spectrum. The resulting Core Curriculum is comprised of then Core Categories, each with a unique purpose and description.

**Mercyhurst Academic Core Categories**

**Category I: Required Freshman Sequence (1, 2, & 3).** The Required Freshman Component includes two classes that introduce and welcome students to academic life, one of which is a writing-intensive introduction to literature. These courses teach students critical thinking skills vital at Mercyhurst and in their lives beyond University.

1. Integrative/Interdisciplinary Course (3 credits)
2. Research & Writing (3 credits)
3. Literary Classics

**Category II. Religious & Philosophical (1 & 2).** Courses in this category enrich the quality of students’ lives by cultivating knowledge and understanding about religion and philosophy and how these form the foundations of a liberal education in the Catholic tradition and, specifically, the mission and core values of a Mercy institution. They provide students the opportunity to develop those transferable cognitive, affective, and social skills and values that accompany a healthy spiritual, rational, and ethical life.

1. Religious Traditions (100-level RLST Course)
2. Philosophy

**Category III. Language and Literature (1 or 2).** Courses in Language and Literature cultivate students’ critical thinking and communication skills through intensive study of written and spoken language. Specifically, in language classes, students hone the essential skills of reading, writing, listening to, and speaking a world language, while examining basic linguistic structures.

1. Language, OR
2. Literature

**Category IV. Civic Responsibility & Historical Understanding (1 & 2).** Courses in this category provide a broad exploration of the ideas, values, events, institutions, and personalities that have shaped our nation and the
world. Courses in U.S. History and American Government provide students with the knowledge and understanding necessary to be enlightened and engaged citizens who are sensitive to diversity and committed to democratic principles. With similar goals, but an even broader focus, the study of European and/or World history widens and deepens students’ understanding of the world, providing the intellectual skills and abilities essential to a liberal arts education.

1. U.S. History or American Government
2. European or World History

Category V. Scientific, Quantitative, & Critical Reasoning (1 & 2). The two courses taken in this category are designed to give the student a basic understanding of a specific discipline. Student will be introduced to modern scientific discoveries, current and relevant issues, and research methodologies in that field. The skills learned in these two courses will form a basis for advanced reasoning that will be valuable throughout life as students face the need to understand scientific breakthroughs and global problems and to evaluate these as creative and responsible citizens.

1. Natural Science with Lab
2. Mathematics/Computer Systems

Category VI. Arts Encounter (1 course). Courses in the Arts Encounter category provide students with an opportunity to engage in and deepen their appreciation for aesthetic experiences in the arts. Students will gain a broad understanding of how the arts enhance learning, personal growth, provide cognitive and affective flexibility and integration, and widen our individual and collective horizons, helping us to be more appreciative, empathetic, and understanding of our world.

Category VII. Analysis of Individuals & Society (2 courses). Courses in the Analysis of Individuals and Society category advance students’ knowledge and understanding of how social and behavioral science discovers, describes, and explains human functioning at the individual level, as well as the structure and dynamics of groups, institutions, and larger human systems and organizations.

Category VIII. Global Awareness, Responsibilities, Religions, and Politics (2 courses). Courses in this category prepare students to be globally responsible citizens who live and work in a world of challenges that transcend conventional borders. In a world of increasing globalization, it is more important than ever to appreciate and understand important political, economic, religious and cultural differences and realities, to be aware of social injustices and their possible solutions, and to have the personal resources to respond beneficially.

Category IX. Core Choice (1 course). All courses offered in Core Categories II-VIII are eligible, as well as a few other approved core courses.

Category X. Mercyhurst Senior Course (1 course). Courses in the Senior Ethics Capstone category draw upon students’ maturity of perspective and multidisciplinary knowledge in order to provide them the opportunity to engage in comprehensive, interdisciplinary, integrative, and advanced critical, creative, and ethical reasoning about individual, social, and civic issues. These integrative courses prepare students to fulfill the promise of a liberal education in the Catholic and Mercy traditions and to assume personal responsibility for understanding and solving broad social problems on the basis of their acquired historical understanding, scientific knowledge, intellectual skills and abilities, ecumenism, service, and faith.

D. CORE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Core provides for the acquisition of specific foundational skills necessary for the teaching and development of the cognitive skills. Since the acquisition, fluency, and generalization of cognitive skills is not inherent in any one discipline, the Core Curriculum directs the students toward their development of these skills gradually throughout the curriculum, enlightening the students to a
wide variety of disciplines. As with all courses, the Core Curriculum adheres to an evaluation protocol. Our core curriculum student learning outcomes are reflective of those endorsed by AACU and the Lumina Foundation with both direct (course-specific embedded assessments) and indirect (NSEE and other student surveys) measures of assessment.

Student learning outcomes within the General Education Core represent the accumulated knowledge/skills that all students develop during the course of study at Mercyhurst University. **All Student Learning Outcomes should:**

- Clearly describe what students are asked to do using action verbs (e.g., write an essay, complete a lab exercise, construct an original piece of art)
- Include a time frame for students to accomplish this goal (e.g., end of term)
- Be specific, objective, and measurable

**Mercyhurst Core Student Learning Outcomes**

**Civic Engagement (CE).** Develop the knowledge, skills and values to promote a quality of life that is both individually enriching and socially beneficial.

*Examples of Measurable Learning Objectives.*
- Define choices/responsibilities of an engaged citizenship
- Participate in community action projects
- Explore ideas that shape the nation/world
- Express social and political efficacy

**Creative Thinking (CreT).** Effectively analyze and critically evaluate information and/or ideas from multiple perspectives in original ways; work in an imaginative methodology characterized by a high degree of innovation and/or divergent thinking.

*Examples of Measurable Learning Objectives.*
- Demonstrate the ability to use creative methodologies
- Describe the arts impact on personal growth
- Define the aesthetic experience
- Describe the impact of artistic/creative knowledge and activities

**Critical Thinking (CriT).** Skillfully conceptualize, apply, analyze, synthesize, and/or evaluate information gathered from observations, experiences, reflection, reasoning, and/or communication.

*Examples of Measurable Learning Objectives.*
- Independently develop questions for exploration
- Evaluate the quality of evidence and reasoning behind arguments
- Communicate and defend position/conclusions
- Develop questions for application, analysis, and synthesis

**Effective Communication (EC).** Demonstrate effective skills in writing, visual communication, and speaking with clarity, coherence, and purpose.

*Examples of Measurable Learning Objectives.*
- Arrange supporting details coherently
- Use standard grammar, diction, and mechanics of American English
- Construct logical, persuasive arguments
- Identify, incorporate, and document primary and secondary sources/materials
Ethical Reasoning (ER)/Reflectively Aware (RA). Develop informed awareness and understanding of ethical conduct, social responsibility, and academic and professional integrity. Assess individual ethical values and the social context of problems, recognizing ethical issues in a variety of settings, and considering the ramifications of alternative actions.

Examples of Measurable Learning Objectives.
- Analyze ethical dilemmas and explore foundations for solutions
- Explain ethical models and systems
- Analyze social problems

Intercultural Skills (IS). Demonstrate an understanding of cultural diversity and multiple global perspectives in order to interact effectively in multicultural contexts.

Examples of Measurable Learning Objectives.
- Examine cross-cultural perspectives and compare/contrast one’s own cultural perspective
- Analyze political/social/ethical/communicative/economic systems of culture
- Identify biases and employ effective mitigation strategies
- Demonstrate cultural literacy, including a working knowledge of relevant cultural artifacts and history
- Communicate with cultural sensitivity

Quantitative and Scientific Reasoning (QSR). Use mathematical concepts to make logically sound decisions, judgments, and/or predictions; effectively use scientific inquiry and reasoning to solve problems and analyze and interpret data.

Examples of Measurable Learning Objectives.
- Read, interpret, and analyze information given in various formats such as graphs, tables, figures, formula, or scientific text
- Define and apply relevant mathematical and scientific concepts
- Organize/present data using software applications
- Accurately complete calculations and solve problems using algebraic, geometric, and/or statistical methods
- Estimate answers and check for reasonableness of solutions and recognize the limitations of mathematical and statistical methods
- Formulate independent hypotheses based on scientific inquiry
- Clearly communicate and present mathematical and scientific data

Research and Information Literacy (RIL). Access sources and evaluate information that facilitates critical inquiry; adhere to standards of academic honesty.

Examples of Measurable Learning Objectives.
- Demonstrate the ability to access print, digital, and/or electronic sources
- Evaluate reliability and credibility of sources
- Use information to support an assignment
- Use information in compliance with standards of academic honesty
The following chart highlights the alignment of the eight Core Student Learning Outcomes with the 10 Core Categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category I: Required Freshman Sequence</th>
<th>Effective Communication (EC)</th>
<th>Research/Information Literacy (RIL)</th>
<th>Critical Thinking (CriT)</th>
<th>Creative Thinking (CreT)</th>
<th>Quantitative and Scientific Reasoning (QSR)</th>
<th>Inter-cultural Skills (IS)</th>
<th>Civic Engagement (CE)</th>
<th>Ethical Reasoning (ER)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X X</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Category II. Religious & Philosophical |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       |                       |
| X                                      |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       |                       |

| Category III. Language and Literature |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       |                       |
| X                                      |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       |                       |

| Category IV. Civic Responsibility & Historical Understanding |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       | X                     |
| X                                      |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       |                       |

| Category V. Scientific, Quantitative, & Critical Reasoning |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       | X                     |
| X                                      |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       |                       |

| Category VI. Arts Encounter |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       |                       |
| X                                      |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       |                       |

| Category VII. Analysis of Individuals & Society |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       |                       |
| X                                      |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       |                       |

| Category VIII. Global Awareness, Responsibilities, Religions, and Politics |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       | X                     |
| X                                      |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       |                       |

| Category IX. Core Choice |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       |                       |
|                         |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       |                       |

| Category X. Mercyhurst Senior Course |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       | X                     |
|                                       |                             |                                   |                         |                         |                                             |                           |                       |                       |

Every syllabus for every Core course will contain a *Statement of Core Curriculum Fulfillment* that contains relevant assessment information and serves to inform students about both the placement of the course within the Core curriculum and the associated assessment processes. These statements are available on the Mercyhurst portal for all faculty, staff, and students to access. An example of this form for the Eng100 courses, as well as directions for instructors on how to complete their own form follow.
This is an example of the *Statement of Core Curriculum Fulfillment* that must accompany each Core course syllabus. Each approved course has a unique *Statement*, which can be found on the Mercyhurst portal. The directions for how to complete this form follow.

**Mercyhurst University – CORE Curriculum**

**Category I – Required Freshman Sequence**

**ENG 120 - Semester and Year of Course Offering**

**Course Instructor, Rank, and email**

This course has been approved for the Mercyhurst University Core and fulfills a requirement in Core Area I. The following explicates the Core Learning Outcomes that are associated with this course and how they will be assessed as part of the Core requirements.

**Core Learning Outcomes and Assessment Strategies**

The table below highlights the Student Learning Outcomes associated with every course in *Core Area I – Required Freshman Sequence*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Associated Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective Communication</td>
<td>Demonstrate effective skills in writing, visual communication, and speaking with clarity, coherence, and purpose.</td>
<td>Rubric-based assessment of student work in the form of a specified written paper.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Research and Information Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Critical Thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

All Core Student Learning Outcomes are assessed on a rotating basis of at least once every three years. All assessment documents and information including the scoring rubrics can be found on the Mercyhurst portal and website. Please direct questions to the course professor or to the Core Assessment Coordinator – coreassessment@mercyhurst.edu.

**Course Learning Goals and Objectives**

The following course objectives detail how the specific content of this course will support the above Core Outcomes.

- Identify/define key elements of successful writing (e.g., focus, voice, organization)
- Organize writing into a logical progression of ideas
- Recognize the importance of audience in shaping a writer's tone and style.
- Formulate a specific thesis as the basis for an academic argument
Mercyhurst University Core Curriculum
Statement of Core Curriculum Fulfillment - Directions

In order to ascertain that our syllabi are aligned with the proper Core student learning outcomes and to make sure that each student understands the Core requirements and assessment strategies, each Core course syllabus must include a Statement of Core Curriculum Fulfillment. These are the parameters and directions for that requirement. (Note that this eliminates the need for the Core ‘boxes’ that have been on the syllabus during the previous year, and they can be removed. The Program Assessment portion cannot be changed.)

1. Obtain the statement that corresponds to the Core course you are teaching. These already prepared documents can be found on the Mercyhurst Portal: First, log in to the portal. Click on Services → Assessment and Planning → Assessment → General Education (Core) Assessment → (select the appropriate SLO) → Syllabi → (select the appropriate course)

2. Replace the red text at the top of the page with your personal information, including the semester/year of the course, and your name, rank, email, office hours, etc.

3. Ascertaining that the bullets corresponding to Course Learning Goals and Objectives are reflected somewhere in the main body of your syllabus. They must appear and match identically, word-for-word. These were taken directly from the Core course proposals that were submitted to the CCAC. Should your department wish to change these course level goals and objectives, please submit a Core Course Amendment Form to the Coordinator for Core Assessment.

4. Attach the completed form - the Statement of Core Curriculum Fulfillment - to the front of your syllabus. All enrolled students must receive a paper copy, and it must also be included in electronic versions of your syllabus (for example, if posted on BlackBoard).

Please remember to include a Statement of Support for the Mercy Mission somewhere in the main body of your syllabus.

Example: This course supports the Mercy Mission by creating students who are [pick a core value]. This is achieved through [state how your course promotes that value].

Thank you for your cooperation in meeting our assessment and disclosure requirements. If you have any questions, please contact the Coordinator for Core Assessment, coreassessment@mercyhurst.edu or the Office of Academic Affairs.
E. CORE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Banta (2002) describes three phases of a successful assessment system: planning, implementation, and improving/sustaining. In all three of these phases, faculty as well as administrator stakeholders are involved in the process. During the planning phase, faculty have the opportunity to discuss the dynamic use of student learning outcomes in the classroom and choose assessment strategies accordingly through the Workgroups that are created for each outcome. The implementation phase is carried out with a clear plan and purpose and is done so in the most authentic and least invasive possible manner. The improving and sustaining phase is grounded in the collected evidence and includes ongoing dissemination of information to improve the general education component of our curriculum.

Of primary importance to this process is the assessment feedback loop. For assessment to work effectively and efficiently, results should provide feedback that leads to pedagogical decisions that in turn lead to improvement for a given SLO. Our three-year assessment cycle will ensure that evaluation measures are sustained and that continual improvement is ongoing. Evidence collected from the assessed SLOs will be reviewed annually and involve all faculty charged with gathering data on each of the outcomes evaluated for that particular year as well as other faculty stakeholders. The Coordinator for Core Assessment will moderate discussions about the assessment data with the Core Workgroup and to elicit interpretations of the assessment findings and make suggestions for future assessment cycles. This discussion will culminate with the completion of the Core Assessment Annual Progress Report and the Core Assessment Action Plan, which includes evaluation conclusions, recommended actions, and recommended resource allocation. The Progress Report and Action Plan are forwarded to the VPAA for (a) dissemination to faculty, and administration, and/or (b) submission to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee if budget resource allocation is recommended. The VPAA will also complete the Core Assessment Review Report, resulting in the evaluation of the core assessment process.

The Core Curriculum assessment at Mercyhurst University is organized around 6 basic steps. These steps will be completed for each SLO during each cycle of assessment (once every three years, at minimum).

1. Review and refine definition of the SLO as necessary and suggested by previous assessment results.
2. Review and refine the provided examples of measurable learning objectives for each SLO
3. Identify the method of assessment, including implementation timelines and the assessment tool to be used (e.g. rubric, conceptual test)
4. Analyze data and disseminate results to the affected course instructors, Workgroup members, and other faculty constituents
5. Propose interpretations and recommendations based on stakeholder input (reported on Core Assessment Progress Report and Core Assessment Action Plan forms)
6. Use data for decision-making at all levels (e.g. adjustments to courses and the larger general education curriculum, budgeting decisions, future assessment implications)

Items 1-3, and 5 will be carried out in large part within the Workgroups so that the faculty continue to maintain ownership of the Core, assessing and driving change as necessary.
The evaluation of the Core Curriculum is both formative and summative. Formative assessment will analyze specific core learning outcome data on an annual basis. Summative assessment will analyze the eight core learning outcomes across the curriculum on a three-year cycle. Data will also be analyzed across other parameters (e.g. baccalaureate or associate programs, transfer or traditional student, etc.).

The following table details the assessment cycle for each Core Student Learning Outcome, including the Primary Core Category as well as the 3-year rotating assessment cycle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Competency</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Primary Core Category</th>
<th>First Assessment Cycle</th>
<th>Second Assessment Cycle</th>
<th>First year of 3-year Cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civic Engagement</td>
<td>CE</td>
<td>Category IV, Civic Responsibility &amp; Historical Understanding</td>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
<td>Spring 2015</td>
<td>2017-2018 Academic Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Thinking</td>
<td>CreT</td>
<td>Category VI. Arts Encounter</td>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
<td>Spring 2015</td>
<td>2017-2018 Academic Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>CriT</td>
<td>Category II. Religious &amp; Philosophical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Category III. Language and Literature</td>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>Fall 2014</td>
<td>2015-2016 Academic Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Category VII. Analysis of Individ. &amp; Society</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Communication</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Category I: Required Freshman Sequence</td>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>Fall 2014</td>
<td>2015-2016 Academic Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Reasoning</td>
<td>ER</td>
<td>Category X. Mercyhurst Senior Capstone Course</td>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
<td>Spring 2015</td>
<td>2017-2018 Academic Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural Skills</td>
<td>IS</td>
<td>Category VIII. Global Awareness, Responsibilities, Religions, and Politics</td>
<td>J-term 2014</td>
<td>Fall 2015</td>
<td>2016-2017 Academic Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and Information Literacy</td>
<td>RIL</td>
<td>Category I: Required Freshman Sequence</td>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>Fall 2014</td>
<td>2015-2016 Academic Year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the end of each Core Assessment Cycle, a Core Assessment Annual Progress Report and a Core Assessment Action Plan will be filed for each Core Student Learning Outcome.

This section explains what information is included on each of those forms and what information readers should expect to learn from those reports.
Annual Progress Report
The Annual Progress Report for each Core SLO can be thought of as the executive summary of the findings during the given assessment cycle. The Annual Progress report contains the completed form as well as a written synopsis of the assessment processes and results. Also in that document are the interpretations and recommendations of the faculty constituents in regard to the assessment data. These are most often solicited in terms of an open faculty forum or lunch discussion where any interested parties, primarily the category constituents, are invited to contribute. The Annual Progress report is then forwarded on to the Office of Academic Affairs for review. Once the report is accepted, it is made available to all students, faculty, and staff through the Assessment site on the Portal.

Action Plan
Along with the Annual Progress report, the Action Plan serves as the description of how the results of the assessment process will be put into use. The Action Plan should mirror the recommendations of the faculty, both Workgroups as well as other stakeholders, and assessment coordinators. Specifically, it is important that the Action Plan contain valid, realistic goals and a proposal of how those goals will be met. Along with the Annual Progress Report, the Action Plan is forwarded on to the Office of Academic Affairs for review. Once the report is accepted, it is made available to all students, faculty, and staff through the Assessment site on the Portal.

G. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
The success of the Core Curriculum assessment program, and all assessment in general, depends on the dedication of the constituents and their commitment to the process of assessment. It is important to remember that assessment is a tool that facilitates growth, development, and progress - it is vital for any institution to continuing moving forward. With that in mind, the following provides a basic structure of responsibilities and roles in the Core Assessment Process.

The Core Assessment Coordinator is a faculty liaison to the Office of Academic Affairs and the APD. The role matches the title: the primary function is to coordinate and facilitate the assessment of all Core SLOs during each assessment cycle. This includes but is not limited to: overseeing the choice of assessment technique; serving as the primary point of contact for the distribution of information about assessment and the fundamental faculty questions about core assessment; initiating the use of assessment tools, protocols, rubrics, etc.; facilitating the collection of data in its various forms, including quantitative data and direct exemplars of student work; and preparing the end-of-cycle assessment reports and forms with the input of faculty constituents.

The Core Workgroups serve as the liaisons between the faculty and the Core Assessment Coordinator. Workgroups include faculty and staff volunteers (typically 5-8 per SLO) who are able to thoughtfully represent the faculty who are teaching in the respective Core Areas and/or who have some interest or expertise in the SLO. On the implementation end of the assessment process, The Workgroups are responsible for helping to review and refine the SLOs and the examples of measurable learning objectives as necessary, for identifying and making adjustments to the method of assessment for the given SLO. After the data has been collected and analyzed,
the Workgroup is then reconvened to assist with the interpretation of the collected data and to make suggestions for changes based on those results. Having a Workgroups structure in the assessment process ensures that ownership of the Core remains with the faculty and that the interests of the faculty guide the questions asked by assessment in regard to the Core SLOs.

**All Faculty** and Staff are responsible for engaging in the process and supporting the assessment process in both word and action. Because all students are required to complete the Core Curriculum, all faculty should be invested in the success of that program. As such, all faculty are invited to participate in Work Groups to determine our assessment strategies as well as in the reviews and report-writing of the assessment data.

**Core Faculty** or any instructor teaching in the Core must carry out the required assessments during the applicable semesters, which may involve encouraging and enforcing student participation in quantitative assessments, using a rubric to assess student performance on Core SLOs and/or collecting exemplars of student work.

**All Students** are responsible for thoughtfully completing the assessments requested of them while enrolled in a Core course.

**The Office of Academic Affairs (primarily the Vice President for Academic Affairs)** is responsible for: facilitating the assessment process to the extent possible; reviewing all Core SLO documents, including the Annual Progress Reports and Action Plans; completing a Core Assessment Review Report for each SLO assessment cycle’ meeting with external consultants and personnel as warranted; incorporating recommendations of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee findings into budget planning; and providing support so that the next steps and expectations in the Action Plan can be achieved.
VI. WEAVEonline

A. WHAT IS WEAVEonline?

WEAVEonline is a central repository for assessment information where faculty and staff can learn about and document assessment and quality improvement processes, procedures, and evidence. The software records assessment practices in academic, administrative, and educational support areas. This system is also helpful for tracking assessment information for accrediting groups (such as MSCHE) and annual reports. In addition, entered data can be linked to Academic Program Outcomes, General Education/Core Curriculum Outcomes, and the Strategic Plan (Texas A&M).

WEAVE is a powerful software application that addresses the need to develop and maintain continuous improvement processes for both the academic and administrative structures within an institution of higher education. It guides and provides for the alignment of multiple processes, including assessment, planning, accreditation, budgeting and institutional priorities. Weave has been adopted system-wide on campuses. WEAVE allows for timely feedback, and eliminates the need for cumbersome and labor-intensive reporting systems. It neatly incorporates all of the steps in the assessment feedback loop, and ensures that all student-learning outcomes are being measured and evaluated. These features also thoroughly address accreditation requirements. The program easily generates several types of accreditation related reports, lessening the burden of that process as well. (IU – South Bend)
VII. Student Information
(excerpted from Marymount University Assessment Guide)

Students should be aware that their work may be used in the assessment purposes. Student work is protected by The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99). To comply with FERPA regulations, student work should either be maintained in a secure system with access limited to those involved in assessment or should have all personally identifiable information removed. Even without a name, some student work is considered identifiable if it contains sufficient information about the student to enable the author to be identified.

Due to the small numbers of students in some of Mercyhurst’s academic programs, data should be collected on each student to maximize the information regarding how well the students have achieved their respective programs’ learning outcomes.
A. GLOSSARY OF TERMS (From Concordia College)

**Achievement test**
A test that measures how well a student has reached the objectives of a specific course or program.

**Alternative assessment**
Non-traditional forms of assessment; may include portfolios, observations, work samples, or group projects.

**Assessment**
Any systematic method of obtaining information from tests and other sources, used to draw inferences about characteristics of people, objects, or programs; the process of gathering, describing, or quantifying information about performance; an exercise such as a written test, portfolio, or experiment that seeks to measure a student's skills or knowledge in a subject area.

**Assessment, Direct**
Involves looking at student performance by examining samples of student work. This assessment may examine student outcomes from a given course, from a degree program or from the overall University (as in achieving University General Education Goals). Examples of the work to be assessed are: targeted objectives exhibited on final exams questions; student papers or presentations assessed for achievement of course or program goals; student portfolios assessed for achievement of course, program, or University goals; or licensure exams for professional programs.

**Assessment, Indirect**
Gathering information about student learning by looking at indicators of learning other than student work output. This assessment approach is intended to find out about the quality of the learning process by getting feedback from the student or other persons who may provide relevant information. It may use surveys of employers, exit interviews of graduates, focus groups, or any number of Classroom Assessment Techniques (e.g. minute papers, muddiest point papers or one sentence summaries.)

**Assessment, Institutional**
A measure of the institution’s overall effectiveness in achieving its educational mission.

**Assessment Program**
A process for measuring and improving the effectiveness of meeting student learning goals established for majors of an academic program.
Benchmark
A standard by which something can be measured or judged.

Content validity
How well the content of a test reflects the construct that the test is measuring.

Criterion referenced assessment
An assessment where an individual's performance is compared to a specific learning objective or performance standard and not to the performance of other students. Criterion referenced assessment tells us how well students are performing on specific goals or standards rather than just telling how their performance compares to a norm group of students nationally or locally. In criterion-referenced assessments, it is possible that none, or all, of the examinees will reach a particular goal or performance standard.

Culture of evidence
A campus-wide belief and behavior in which assessment findings are consistently and routinely used to improve student learning and make decisions.

Data-based
Using data (i.e., evidence) as opposed to intuition or belief when making a decision.

Diagnostic test
Test that identifies a student’s strengths and weaknesses.

Evaluation
Making decision(s) based on the results of assessment

Face validity
The degree to which a test looks right and appears to measure the knowledge or abilities it claims to measure, based on the subjective judgment of the examinees who take it, the administrative personnel who decide on its use, and other psychometrically unsophisticated observers.

Feedback loop
The continuous cycle of collecting assessment results, evaluating them, using the evaluations to identify actions that will improve student learning, implementing those actions, and then cycling back to collecting assessment results, etc.

Formative assessment
An assessment used during the course of instruction to provide feedback to the teacher and learner about the learner’s progress toward desired educational outcomes; the results of formative assessments are often used in planning subsequent instruction.

High-stakes testing
Standardized tests that have become the only criterion for inclusion or exclusion.
**Holistic scoring**
Method of rating an assessment based on general descriptions of performance at specified levels; while a holistic scoring rubric may take into account performance along several dimensions (e.g., fluency, grammatical accuracy, and word choice for oral language), one overall score which best represents the examinee’s performance is assigned.

**Norm-referenced tests**
An objective test that is standardized on a group of individuals whose performance is evaluated in relation to the performance of others; contrasted with criterion-referenced tests. Most standardized achievement tests are referred to as norm-referenced.

**Outcome**
A measurable variable or attribute that is considered an indicator of achievement or of progress toward its related goal. [May also be referred to as “learning outcome,” “student learning outcome,” or “educational outcome.” Outcome and objective are often used interchangeably.]

**Outcome data**
Data obtained by using the outcome measurement tools to assess student learning, as defined in the program assessment plan.

**Performance based assessment**
Performance assessment is a form of testing that requires students to perform a task rather than select an answer from a ready-made list. Performance assessment is an activity that requires students to construct a response, create a product, or perform a demonstration. Usually there are multiple ways that an examinee can approach a performance assessment and more than one correct answer.

**Placement test**
A test that has the purpose of placing a student into a particular level or section of a language curriculum or school.

**Proficiency test**
A proficiency test is not limited to any one course, curriculum, or single skill in the language; rather it tests overall ability.

**Rubric**
A set of specific criteria used to assess student work or performance. A rubric often improves the consistency and accuracy of subjective assessments.

**Scale score**
Score that allows test results to be compared across students; in standardized testing, raw scores are often converted to scale scores.
Standardized test
A test that presupposes certain standard objectives, or criteria, that are held constant across one form of the test to another.

Student learning
The knowledge and skills that a student is expected to acquire.

Summative assessment
Assessment that aims to measure, or summarize, what a student has grasped, and typically occurs at the end of a course or unit of instruction.

Triangulation
A process of combining methodologies to strengthen the reliability of a design approach; when applied to alternative assessment, triangulation refers to the collection and comparison of data or information from three difference sources or perspectives.

Validity
The extent to which inferences made from assessment results are appropriate, meaningful, and useful in terms of the purpose of the assessment.

Value-Added Assessment
A measure of the growth in a student’s knowledge and skills over time. A value-added assessment requires at least two measures of the same learning outcome at different points in time, usually at the beginning of the course or program and just prior to completion.

B. MIDDLE STATES STANDARDS OF AND CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENCE

Standard 2 - Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal
An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.

Fundamental Elements of Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal
An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities:

- goals and objectives or strategies, both institution-wide and for individual units that are clearly stated, reflect conclusions drawn from assessment results, are linked to mission and goal achievement, and are used for planning and resource allocation at the institutional and unit levels; planning and improvement processes that are clearly communicated, provide for constituent participation, and incorporate the use of assessment results; well defined
decision-making processes and authority that facilitates planning and renewal; the
assignment of responsibility for improvements and assurance of accountability; a record of
institutional and unit improvement efforts and their results and periodic assessment of the
effectiveness of planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes.

Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental
elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements
and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists. Where an institution
does not possess or demonstrate evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution
may demonstrate through alternative information and analysis that it meets the standard.

Standard 7 - Institutional Assessment
The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall
effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation
standards.

Fundamental Elements of Institutional Assessment
An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or
activities:
✓ documented, organized, and sustained assessment process to evaluate and improve the total
range of programs and services; achievement of institutional mission, goals, and plans; and
compliance with accreditation standards that meets the following criteria:
• a foundation in the institution’s mission and clearly articulated institutional, unit-level,
and program-level goals that encompass all programs, services, and initiatives and are
appropriately integrated with one another (see Standards 1: Mission and Goals and 2:
Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal)
• systematic, sustained, and thorough use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative
measures that:
  o maximize the use of existing data and information;
  o clearly and purposefully relate to the goals they are assessing;
  o are of sufficient quality that results can be used with confidence to inform decisions;
  o support and collaboration of faculty and administration in assessing student
learning and responding to assessment results;
  o clear realistic guidelines and a timetable, supported by appropriate investment of
institutional resources;
  o sufficient simplicity, practicality, detail, and ownership to be sustainable;
  o periodic evaluation of the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the institution’s
assessment process;
✓ evidence that assessment results are shared and discussed with appropriate constituents and
used in institutional planning, resource allocation, and renewal (see Standard 2: Planning,
Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal) to improve and gain efficiencies in
programs, services and processes, including activities specific to the institution’s mission
(e.g., service, outreach, research); and
✓ written institutional (strategic) plan(s) that reflect(s) consideration of assessment results.
Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists. Where an institution does not possess or demonstrate evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution may demonstrate through alternative information and analysis that it meets the standard.

**Standard 14 - Assessment of Student Learning**

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution’s students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.

**Fundamental Elements of Assessment of Student Learning**

An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities:

- clearly articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes (see Standard 11: Educational Offerings), at all levels (institution, degree/program, course) and for all programs that aim to foster student learning and development, that are:
  - appropriately integrated with one another;
  - consonant with the institution’s mission; and
  - consonant with the standards of higher education and of the relevant disciplines;

- documented, organized, and sustained assessment process to evaluate and improve student learning that meets the following criteria:
  - systematic, sustained, and thorough use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative measures that:
    - maximize the use of existing data and information;
    - clearly and purposefully relate to the goals they are assessing;
    - are of sufficient quality that results can be used with confidence to inform decisions; and
    - include direct evidence of student learning;
    - support and collaboration of faculty and administration in assessing student learning and responding to assessment results;
    - clear, realistic guidelines and timetable, supported by appropriate investment of institutional resources;
    - sufficient simplicity, practicality, detail, and ownership to be sustainable; and
    - periodic evaluation of the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the institution’s student learning assessment processes;

- assessment results that provide sufficient, convincing evidence that students are achieving key institutional and program learning outcomes;

- evidence that student learning assessment information is shared and discussed with appropriate constituents and is used to improve teaching and learning; and

- documented use of student learning assessment information as part of institutional assessment.

Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements
and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists. Where an institution does not possess or demonstrate evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution may demonstrate through alternative information and analysis that it meets the standard.
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