

The Office of Curriculum, Accreditation and Assessment

# Institutional Effectiveness

## An Assessment Update

### Assessment at NKU

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word assessment? Grades, tests, data collection, or PAINFUL WASTE OF TIME!

Hopefully, your first thought is a positive one because assessment can be meaningful and more than just a collection of data. Assessment can act as a means to improve educational programs and enhance student learning. Remember, student outcomes assessment is not painful if implemented properly and the results are used to help understand how programs are contributing to student growth and development.

Assessment at NKU will focus on improvement. Over the next four years you will hear the words “student learning outcomes” and “student learning outcomes assessment” in conversations all over the campus. By the time the SACS reaffirmation team arrives in 2009, these phrases will become a common part of the campus vocabulary. Keep in mind when you think about student learning assessment, the assessment emphasis is on student learning and development, as opposed to faculty evaluation or comprehensive program review.

#### Assessment Essentials

To make assessment work on the campus, NKU will be purposeful about the information collected and assessment results will be used to improve educational programs. Remember this definition of assessment: “Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development.”

Key elements of effective and ongoing assessment programs are:

1. agreement on the goals and objectives for learning,
2. design and implementation of a thoughtful approach to assessment planning,
3. involvement of individuals from on and off campus,
4. selection and implementation of data collection approaches,
5. examination, communication, and action on assessment finds, and continuous reexamination of the assessment process.

#### SACS Requirements

The Commission on Colleges for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) has adopted detailed criteria for evaluating and accrediting affiliated institutions. Note the explicit importance attributed to assessment of student learning outcomes in criteria 2.5 and 3.3.1 and 4.1.

#### SACS Criteria 2.5 Core Requirements

The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services that (a) result in continuing improvement and (b) demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission.

#### SACS Criteria 3.3.1 Comprehensive Requirements

The institution identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results.

#### SACS Criteria 4.1 Federal Requirements

When evaluating success with respect to student achievement in relation to the institution’s mission, the institution includes, as appropriate, consideration of course completion, state licensing examinations, and job placement rates.

#### Assessment Publications

CAA has several publications that can be borrowed if you feel like learning more about the assessment process.

#### Assessment Workshop

Faculty and staff are encouraged to attend the Assessment Workshop on May 11 in Otto Budig Theatre. The topic presented by Dr. Larry Kelly will be Developing Student Learning Outcomes and Embedding Assessment.

- Mary A. Lepper, JD  
Director of Curriculum,  
Accreditation and Assessment

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## Developing Meaningful Assessment

An Excerpt from: "The Art and Science of Assessing General Education Outcomes: A Practical Guide" by Andrea Leskes and Barbara Wright

"Accreditation agencies have significantly raised their expectations for assessment of student learning, a change that, in turn, has contributed directly to growing campus interest. The standards of both regional (institutional) and specialized (program) accreditors now go beyond simply requiring a process of for assessment to be in place. They stress outcomes, demonstrated achievement of student learning, and use of the assessment results in a cycle of improvement. The presence of a well-functioning system of assessment has become the cornerstone of program or institutional effectiveness." p. 3, 2005.

The Office of Curriculum, Accreditation and Assessment is working to develop a University Assessment Plan to facilitate ongoing assessment. According to Leskes and Wright, systematic assessments that function as an integrated process of inquiry to improve general education, are achievable through a series of logical steps:

**Step 1:** Understand the mission, values, traditions, and aspirations of your institution and the role of general education in advancing them.

**Step 2:** Define key learning goals for your students.

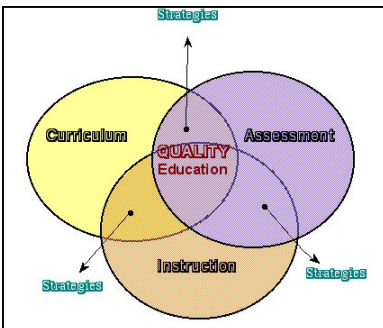
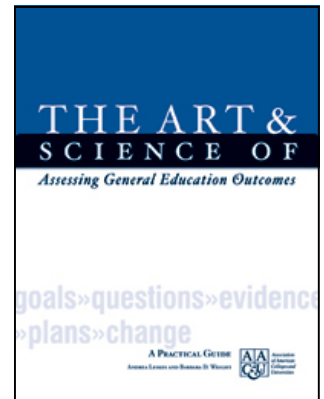
**Step 3:** Turn your broad learning goals into assessable outcomes; specify the level of accomplishment desired.

**Step 4:** Select methods for gathering evidence of learning that are appropriate to your desired goals and outcomes.

**Step 5:** Determine the crucial points at which you need to gather evidence.

**Step 6:** Close the improvement loop by ensuring that you interpret and use the evidence collected.

If you would like to contribute to the development of a University Assessment Plan, please contact the CAA Office.



According to SACS, NKU is responsible for determining student learning outcomes consistent with the mission of the institution for each educational program including general education. SACS requires that the general education program introduce a breadth of knowledge and reinforce cognitive skills and affective learning opportunities for each student and assess the outcomes.

In 2002, Faculty Senate approved a new general education program with the following goals or areas of emphasis:

## General Education Assessment at NKU

- **Writing and Reading Skills:** Students will use writing and reading effectively as a means of learning, critical thinking, and communication.
- **Oral Communication:** Students will demonstrate effective skills and techniques of public oral communication.
- **Quantitative Skills and Scientific Understanding:** Students will apply quantitative skills and scientific understanding toward a range of issues and problems commonly encountered across the curriculum and throughout their lives.
- **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Skills:** Students will develop a broad range of critical thinking and problem solving skills in the scientific, mathematical, social, artistic, and personal domains.
- **Collaboration with Others:** Students will work effectively and responsibly in collaboration with others.
- **Computer and Information Literacy:** Students will employ computer skills that are relevant to their success in college and beyond. Students will gain access to critically evaluate, formulate, and use information effectively and ethically.
- **Diversity:** Students will recognize and respect similarities and differences between their own and other people's cultures, races, genders, abilities, religions, and ethnicities.
- **Historical and Cultural Perspectives:** Students will comprehend the variety and interdependence of the world's cultural, economic, political, social, and ecological systems, and their change over time.
- **Values Appreciation:** Students will comprehend the variety of situations of ethical import of both a personal and public nature in the contemporary world.
- **Aesthetic Appreciation:** Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the creative process and artistic works.

All general education courses are required to satisfy multiple areas of emphasis to be included in the general education program. Once approved for the program, each course must assess the stated measures of student learning outcomes to remain certified for general education credit.

## The Importance of Student Learning Outcomes

In preparation for SACS re-affirmation, the CAA office intends to communicate relevant standards to be considered inline with the Institutional Mission, Governance, and Effectiveness. According to *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* published by SACS for 2007, Comprehensive Standard 3.7 lists the following to be accomplished for re-affirmation.

3.7.1. The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline in accordance with the guidelines listed below. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty.



### Rationale and Notes

This standard asserts the fundamental principle that qualified, effective faculty members are essential to carrying out the goals of the mission of the institution and ensuring the quality and integrity of the academic programs of the institution. The emphasis is on overall qualifications rather than simply academic credentials and that, while academic credentials are primary and in most cases will be the standard qualification for faculty members, other types of qualifications may prove to be appropriate. It is also important to note that the documentation and justification of qualifications for each member of the faculty are the responsibility of the institution.

**Note:** The Commission suggests that institutions use the Commission's "Faculty Roster Form for Full-time and Part-Time Faculty" or a similar format providing the same information to report the qualifications of faculty. The following faculty should be reported: all full-time and part-time faculty teaching credit courses that can be part of a degree, certificate, diploma, or other credential; faculty teaching developmental or remedial courses; and teaching assistants who are the instructors of record.

### Relevant Questions for Consideration:

- How does the mission of the institution

influence the determination of the qualifications of the faculty in order to meet its goals?

- How does the institution determine the competencies of members of the faculty and justify that the qualifications of the members of the faculty meet these competencies?
- How does the institution document and justify the qualifications for each member of the faculty?

### Sample Documentation:

- A complete roster of faculty, qualifications, and teaching assignments (see the Commission's "Faculty Roster Form for Full-time and Part-Time Faculty")
- Policies governing the qualifications of members of the faculty necessary to carry out the mission of the institution and the process for the selection of members of the faculty that ensure these qualifications
- A file or portfolio on each member of the faculty that includes pertinent, up-to-date information describing the qualifications of the faculty member such as curriculum vitae, teaching evaluations, and institutional qualification justifications in nonstandard situations.

## Enhancing Student Learning Outcomes

Who better to help faculty incorporate Student Learning Outcomes in their syllabi than Dr. Larry Kelley, renowned higher education consultant and expert on embedded assessment and student learning outcomes.

Dr. Kelley provides consulting services to colleges and universities on educational planning, assessment and institutional research. In addition to conducting regional workshops and

in-service activities, Dr. Kelley coordinates national and international conferences on educational planning, assessment and institutional research.

This Spring, Dr. Kelley conducted open workshops on implementing course embedded assessment at Lenoir-Rhyne College in North Carolina, Wheeling Jesuit University in West Virginia, Ohio Valley University in West Virginia, Union College in Kentucky,

North Harris Montgomery Community College District in Texas, San Jacinto College in Texas, Midland College in Texas, The Community and Technical College at West Virginia Tech, Golden West College in California, Marion Military Institute in Alabama, Queens University in North Carolina, Niagara University in New York, Yavapai College in Arizona and Pfeiffer University in North Carolina.

For more information on the qualifications of Dr. Kelley, or on the content of his workshops, visit: <http://www.angelfire.com/ia/kelley/>

**Learn how to incorporate SLO in your curriculum!**

**The University Curriculum Committee presents: A Workshop with Dr. Larry Kelley**

**on May 11, 2006 9:30-2:30**

**In the Otto M. Budig Theater**

**Watch the CAA website for more information about the workshop!**  
[www.access.nku.edu/oca/](http://www.access.nku.edu/oca/)

*The Office of Curriculum, Accreditation and Assessment provides assistance to colleges, departments, faculty, and other units of the University in the identification of appropriate information pertinent to measuring programmatic outcomes.*

*The office is responsible for the University's curricular and assessment activities. The office also serves as NKU's Liaison to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and will take a leadership role in the University's 2009 reaffirmation process.*

*During the last two decades, the effectiveness of the world of higher education institutions has been challenged by agents such as federal and state governments, educational foundations, the general public, students and their families, and faculty and administrators within the institution.*



## **FOCUS ON SACS REAFFIRMATION—SCHEDULED FOR 2009**

**Each issue of the newsletter will feature information about the SACS reaffirmation process and requirements. This month we highlight Substantive Change!**

### **Substantive Change**

SACS defines substantive change as a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. SACS accredits the entire institution and its programs and services, wherever they are located or however they are delivered. Accreditation, specific to an institution, is based on conditions existing at the time of the most recent evaluation and is not transferable. When an accredited institution significantly modifies or expands its scope, or changes the nature of its affiliation, a substantive change review is required.

NKU is responsible for following the substantive change policy by informing the Commission on Colleges of changes in accord with the Commission's procedures, and, when required, seeking approval prior to the initiation of the change. If an institution fails to follow the procedures, its accreditation may be placed in jeopardy.

Under this policy, NKU is required to report and seek approval of initiation of new programs at levels not previously approved (distance learning, doctorate level program) or sites outside the region (Ohio), or new sites within the region (St. Elizabeth Hospital) in accordance with the Commission policy on substantive change.

Over the last five years, NKU has submitted three substantive change proposals, all approved. The proposals include extensive documentation supporting the requested change and take approximately three months to prepare. **Depending on the degree of change, SACS can require notification and approval prior to implementation.**

Please notify CAA, in writing, **at least 10 months in advance** of substantive change to existing programs or additions of new sites.

**WE HOPE THAT THIS NEWSLETTER WILL HELP TO KEEP YOU AWARE OF  
UPCOMING GOALS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH  
SACS REAFFIRMATION.**

**PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE WITH COMMENTS OR CONTENT SUGGESTIONS  
TO INCLUDE IN THIS QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER!**

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