



Institutional Expectations for Assessment

The purpose of this document is to provide a general set of expectations to guide assessment practices across campus. These expectations have been developed for both campus units and academic programs, but organizations and committees may choose to use elements of these assessment processes as they execute strategy, monitor progress, and track achievement of outcomes.

Additionally, this document provides the following: 1.) the official scope for assessment practices at Centenary, 2.) how these processes address Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) requirements for assessment, 3.) a brief overview of annual progress scorecards, closing the loop reports, and comprehensive periodic reviews, 4.) the structure of support provided by the Campus Unit Assessment Committee (CUAC), and Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (LOAC), and 5.) oversight by the Institutional Assessment Committee (IAC).

This document updates previous policies on university assessment, and acknowledges Centenary's commitment to continuous improvement across all units and departments on campus. Further, the *Institutional Expectations for Assessment* formalizes the leadership and quality assurance role of the Director of Institutional Research & Assessment, and oversight of these processes by the Institutional Assessment Committee. The Director of Institutional Research & Assessment is also responsible for reporting findings from unit and program assessment cycles to the Centenary University Board of Trustees.

Scope of Assessment Practices

The assessment expectations that follow exist for *campus units* (any office or program on campus that supports academics, community outreach, student affairs, internal operations, and/ or the administration of a series of activities on campus) and *academic programs* (instructional programs that lead to a certificate, associate's, bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree).

Note that *academic departments* are comprised of multiple academic programs, and thus no separate reporting mechanisms are required at the department level. Department Chairs oversee the program level assessment and ensure documents are submitted.

Programs with External Accreditation

Note also that those academic programs that are externally accredited by a disciplinary body or professional organization may elect not to participate in Centenary's local expectations for periodic (5 year) comprehensive assessment. Considerable time and resources are expended in securing and maintaining specialized disciplinary accreditation, and these standards often exceed the rigorous expectations of regional accreditors. However, it is required that these programs participate in the annual reporting cycle by submitting documentation deemed reflective of current progress. Centenary recognizes these external accreditations as clear indicators of program quality, and will not subject these programs to unnecessarily duplicative assessment requirements.

MSCHE Requirements for Assessment

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) expects the following of higher education institutions. Assessment is:

1.) An ongoing process consistent with externally validated standards

“Accredited institutions are expected to demonstrate compliance with these standards and requirements, to conduct their activities in a manner consistent with the standards and requirements, and to engage in ongoing processes of self-review and improvement” (p. 1, *MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation*)

2.) A continuous process that is validated periodically

“To be eligible for, to achieve, and to maintain Middle States Commission on Higher Education accreditation, an institution must demonstrate that it fully meets the following Requirements of Affiliation. Compliance is expected to be continuous and will be validated periodically, typically at the time of institutional self-study and during any other evaluation of the institution’s compliance. Once eligibility is established, an institution then must demonstrate on an ongoing basis that it meets the Standards for Accreditation” (p.2, *MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation*).

3.) Publicly disclosed

“The institution systematically evaluates its educational and other programs and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes. The institution’s student learning programs and opportunities are characterized by rigor, coherence, and appropriate assessment of student achievement throughout the educational offerings, regardless of certificate or degree level or delivery and instructional modality” (p.3, *MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation*).

4.) Integrated with institutional planning processes

“Institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student achievement of educational goals, student learning, and the results of academic and institutional assessments” (p.3, *MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation*).

These expectations are referred to throughout the document as *MSCHE Expectation 1, 2, 3, and 4*.

Overview of Assessment Processes

The assessment framework below has been designed by the Director of Institutional Research & Assessment in collaboration with the Institutional Effectiveness Design Team; however, it is important to emphasize that **campus unit and academic program assessment activities are to be faculty/staff – created, -- maintained and – supervised.** The Campus Unit Assessment Committee (CUAC) and Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (LOAC), and Assessment Coaches provide constructive peer feedback support to staff and faculty. The Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (OIRA) fulfills data requests, consults on measurement issues, survey construction and administration, identification of statistical analyses, and data interpretation. To reiterate, these are support and consultative bodies to enhance a unit or program’s assessment plan. The Institutional Assessment Committee (IAC) exists to provide formal accountability, and ensure that assessment information is used to guide institutional planning and resource allocation (*MSCHE Expectation 4*).

Expectations for Campus Unit and Program Assessment

In order to ensure Centenary meets or exceeds the assessment standards by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and any discipline-specific accrediting bodies, unit and program assessment plans are to, at minimum, meet the following expectations:

- **Number of Unit / Program Goals:** 5 – 7 student learning outcomes or operational goals
 - **Annual Assessment:** 1 – 2 of those outcomes / goals assessed per year
 - **Evidence Quality:** at least 1 direct and 1 indirect measure
 - **Rotation:** All outcomes to be assessed by time of comprehensive review

These expectations are derived from [Walvoord's \(2010\)](#) basic no frills assessment plan (*MSCHE Expectation 1*).

Annual Progress Reports

A means of documenting annual progress is absolutely necessary for campus units and academic programs. This practice confirms the ongoing nature of assessment at the unit or program level (*MSCHE Expectation 1*). More importantly, annual progress reports help units and programs evaluate, with valid evidence, where they excel and identify areas that need improvement. Continuous improvement is impossible without some form of annual reporting mechanism.

Annual Progress Scorecards and Closing the Loop reports are currently in the prototype stage. Early adopters are encouraged to participate in this stage of review. Adopters will be in the best position to offer informed feedback and suggestions for process improvement.

Annual Progress Scorecards. The process of constructing a scorecard requires several preparatory activities with members of the unit / program. In this process, academic programs develop a mission statement and intended student learning outcomes. Mission statements are to be posted on program/unit webpages, and student learning outcomes are to be included on all relevant academic program documentation including webpages. These practices ensure public disclosure (*MSCHE Expectation 3*).

Closing the Loop Reports. “Closing the Loop” Reports are used to document data-driven action and assessment-informed change, and plan the program/ unit outcomes to be assessed in the next year. This document also effectually prepares Chairs and managers for productive, forward-thinking discussions with their respective Vice Presidents on an annual basis.

Comprehensive Reviews

The schedule for periodic reviews and review criteria was created by the Institutional Assessment Committee in Fall 2015. All campus units and academic programs participate in comprehensive review at least every five years. The schedule and criteria for reviews can be found on the Comprehensive Reviews [page](#) on the OIRA site. Reviews are to be posted on the program webpage and/or OIRA site for public disclosure (*MSCHE Expectation 3*).

MSCHE Resources

[Why are we assessing?](#)

[Assessing Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness: Understanding Middle States Expectations.](#)

[MSCHE Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Student Learning Assessment Processes](#)

[Examples of Evidence for Student Learning](#)

[General Education Competency Grid](#)

[How to Achieve Deep, Lasting Learning](#)

[MSCHE Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Educations: Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation \(2011\)](#)

[MSCHE Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation \(2015\)](#)