



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 all campus units both academic departments/units and other campus departments/units.

Additionally, this document provides the following: 1.) the official scope for assessment practices at Centenary, 2.) how these processes address the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) requirements for assessment, 3.) a brief overview of campus department/unit institutional effectiveness plans and annual reports, and 4.) the structure of support provided by the Institutional Assessment Committee (IAC) and Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (LOAC).

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 Coordinator of Institutional Research & Assessment, and oversight of these processes by the Institutional Assessment Committee.

Scope of Assessment Practices

The assessment expectations that follow exist for all *campus units* (academic departments, 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* may have multiple academic programs and, thus, must provide student learning outcomes for each academic program offered by the academic department as well as operational outcomes for the academic department as a whole. Department chairs oversee the program level assessment and the department level assessment and ensure that documents are submitted.

Programs with External Accreditation

Note also that those academic programs that are externally accredited by a disciplinary body or professional organization should be allowed to have their periodic (5-7 year) local comprehensive assessment take place as they are undergoing their disciplinary accreditation or re-accreditation process and they should be able to use the disciplinary accreditation/re-accreditation materials and process to serve as the local comprehensive assessment. However, it is required that these programs participate in the annual reporting cycle by submitting documentation deemed reflective of current progress.

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 Coordinator of Institutional Research & Assessment in collaboration with the Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee and the Executive Staff. The Institutional Assessment Committee (IAC) and the Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (LOAC) provide constructive peer feedback support to staff and faculty. The Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (OIRA) provides coordination and support to the processes. 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/Department Operational Outcomes:** 4 - 6
- **Number of Program Student Learning Outcomes:** 4 - 6
- **Annual Assessment:** All operational outcomes should be assessed each year. At least 2 of the student learning outcomes for each program should be assessed each year.
- **Evidence Quality:** At least 1 direct measure should be used for each outcome. Other direct or indirect measures may be used for a particular outcome if applicable.
- **Rotation:** All outcomes must be assessed by the time of the unit/department comprehensive review.

Institutional Effectiveness Plans

Each campus unit/department must file an Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP) that includes operational outcomes. For academic departments, the IEP must also include student learning outcomes for each academic program. In addition, the IEP must include information on the assessment measures and performance criteria that will be used to measure the level of success in meeting the listed outcomes. The IEP must also include information on the plan for obtaining data to measure the level of success for meeting the listed outcomes and the timing for when each outcome will be assessed.

Institutional Effectiveness Annual 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.

Each campus unit/department must file an Institutional Effectiveness Annual Report (IEAR) that provides assessment results for all operational outcomes and for at least 2 student learning outcomes for each academic program. The annual report must also include an action plan for how the assessment results will be used to improve effectiveness of the unit/department or the academic program and the budget implications (if any) for the plan of action.

Comprehensive Reviews

All campus units and academic programs must participate in a comprehensive review at least every seven years. The schedule and criteria for reviews is under development by the Institutional Assessment Committee (IAC).

MSCHE Resources

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