

HANDBOOK FOR  
PROGRAM OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

2013-2014

Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee



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OKLAHOMA CITY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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## **Section I**

### **Overview of Assessment at Oklahoma City Community College**

Student assessment at Oklahoma City Community College begins when a student seeks to enroll for the first time. Entry level assessment is critical to the student being placed in the class that will allow optimal learning and success for the student. Once a student is attending classes, learning is assessed within and at the end of classes. Classroom assessment includes those activities that a teacher uses to evaluate individual students and the learning that they achieve within that one course. Examples of classroom assessment include tests or quizzes, homework, written work such as essays, performances such as speeches, lab experiments, etc. End of course assessment includes any sort of final evaluation of the student's learning, such as a final examination, a capstone project, or final essay. The general education outcomes expected of students are assessed when a student has completed at least thirty hours at Oklahoma City Community College. Student learning is assessed again as students complete their programs. In this case the assessment process uses both direct and indirect measures in the assessment of student learning outcomes and program outputs. (See the Glossary for the definition of these terms). The College approved definition of assessment is as follows:

Assessment at Oklahoma City Community College is the continuous improvement of and commitment to student learning through clear statements of student learning outcomes, explicit measures of these outcomes, established criteria for success, and defined methods of how the program will use the results.

## **Section II**

### **Principles of Assessment at Oklahoma City Community College**

A review of the academic outcomes assessment system was made in December of 2001. The system of assessment in place was not meeting the needs of the institution or the concerns expressed by the Higher Learning Commission. A new system was developed for implementation in the FY 2004 cycle. This process was developed based on the following principles:

- Assessment is faculty driven. Faculty members identify the outcomes, specify the means of assessment, and decide what to do with the results.
- Assessment is an ongoing process and every employee has a role. Through the assessment process Oklahoma City Community College demonstrates a willingness to be held accountable to the highest standards of education.
- The primary function of assessment is to improve student learning, and is integral to the ideal of continuous quality improvement.
- Assessment is used by accrediting agencies to measure program quality. Oklahoma City Community College strives to meet and surpass accreditation standards.
- Faculty members at Oklahoma City Community College have the primary responsibility of instruction. Secondary responsibilities include, but are not limited to, supporting the integrity of curricula, encouraging student success, and participating in the assessment of student learning outcomes for the program and/or department.

## Section III

### The Formal Process of Assessment at Oklahoma City Community College

The assessment process at Oklahoma City Community College involves providing data for specific learning outcomes (preferably trend data gathered over more than one assessment cycle), indicating the meaning/relevance of the data, making recommendations informed by the data, implementing the recommendations, and “closing the loop” by reassessing the learning outcomes and evaluating any effects of the changes that were made.

The formal assessment process begins each year with a five year plan of what student learning outcomes for a program are to be assessed in the coming year and the subsequent four years, what measurements will be used to determine if those learning outcomes have been achieved, and what criteria will be used to define successful attainment of the program's intended outcomes. Program faculty develop and agree upon the student learning outcomes, measures, and criteria for success and fill out the appropriate form for reporting their assessment plan. Program faculty submit the completed five year plan to the appropriate Director or Division Dean by the **first Monday of November**. The Directors or Deans, after reviewing the plans and requesting clarifications or revisions from program faculty as needed, forward copies of the completed plans to the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Director of Curriculum and Assessment by the **first Monday of December**.

Program faculty oversee the collection of the artifacts or the activities that will be used to measure the student learning outcomes for the current year at appropriate times during the remainder of the academic year as specified in the program's assessment plan.

When the next Fall semester begins, program faculty start analyzing the information they have gathered during the previous year. Program faculty meet to discuss what they have learned through the assessment process and write a report that includes their findings and any recommendations, based upon those findings, that may affect the program. The report should also address whether any changes recommended in prior years have had an impact. The recommendations for action and the analysis of the effects of prior actions are a vital part of the assessment report because they represent "closing the loop" – using what has been learned about the program through assessment to continuously improve the program as much as possible. This report containing what has been learned through the assessment process and the recommended action items is sent to the appropriate Director or Division Dean by the **first Monday of October**. The Directors or Deans, after reviewing the reports and requesting clarifications or revisions from program faculty as needed, forward copies of the completed reports to the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Director of Curriculum and Assessment by the **first Monday in November**.

The assessment cycle begins again as program faculty consider the previous year's experiences and determine if the plans for the remaining four years of the original five year plan need revision. Program faculty also determine what outcomes, measures, and criteria for success will be appropriate for a fifth year of the new plan. Faculty submit the new five year plan to the appropriate Director or Dean by the **first Monday of November** and the cycle continues.

The information gathered during a five year assessment cycle is an important part of the program review process conducted every five years for the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

## **Section IV**

### **Annual Assessment and Five Year Program Reviews**

Every five years each program that awards degrees or certificates undergoes a program review. The review, required by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, gives program faculty an opportunity to examine all aspects of the program – individual courses, the program course sequence, general education and support courses, resources, challenges, and successes. Outcomes assessment plays a crucial supporting role during a program review since it is one of the most important sources of information about the quality of the program. Since the program faculty will have collected assessment data over the five year period prior to the program review, they should be able to look at trends in their data to see if program quality has improved over time. Having a good assessment plan with all student learning outcomes being assessed more than once during a five year cycle is therefore an important part of the program review process.

Because of the connection between outcomes assessment and the program review process, subgroups consisting of two to three members of the Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee will review assessment plans and reports for a program the year before the program is scheduled to go through the formal five year program review process. The intent of this "pre-review" of program assessment is to give program faculty some constructive feedback on their assessment plans and reports so that when they start their official program review process, they can take into account anything learned from the initial review of the assessment component of their program.

Furthermore, because of the importance of assessment in the program review process, the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs has charged the Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee with the task of serving as an initial external review body for the program reviews submitted each year. Subgroups of the AOAC, typically consisting of two or three voting members, read the program review documents and provide feedback to the authors of the program reviews. The subgroups are asked to consider the following questions when looking at program reviews:

- 1) How many student learning outcomes are listed for the program? Is the number reasonable? (Three to five outcomes are generally fine. More than eight should generally not be necessary.)
- 2) Does each student learning outcome encompass only one or two expectations or are individual outcomes overly broad and try to cover too many areas/skills? Can you suggest how statements of the student learning outcomes can be improved?
- 3) Do the student learning outcomes focus on skills or areas of knowledge that seem appropriate to the discipline? Can you list any skills or areas of knowledge that might be missing?

- 4) Do the program outputs seem appropriate for the program? Can you suggest additional outputs that might be appropriate?
- 5) Is there evidence of the collection and use of trend data for program evaluation?
- 6) Is there evidence in the program review document that decisions about the program (resources, curricula, etc.) are being influenced by the assessment process? If so, how?
- 7) Is the program using any additional information beyond the annual assessment data to examine and improve the program? If so, what data are being used?
- 8) Are the program strengths, concerns, and recommended actions reasonable? Can you suggest any additional strengths, concerns, or recommended actions?
- 9) Are any program strengths or concerns supported by information obtained through the assessment process? If so, how? If not, can you suggest how any strengths or concerns can be linked to what has been learned through assessment?
- 10) Is the general education assessment artifact data being used to inform program strength and weakness? If so, how?

## **Section V**

### Developing an Assessment Plan – A Step-by-Step Guide

Each program should have an assessment plan that contains the student learning outcomes for program students, at least one measurement for each outcome, and a criterion for defining successful attainment of each learning goal. The assessment plan should also include one or more program outputs. The following outline is intended to help you get started with your plan or to refine your existing assessment plan. This is an outline only; whole books are available on how to write learning outcomes or objectives and assessment plans.

- 1) Program faculty meet and discuss what skills or areas of knowledge they expect program graduates to be able to demonstrate and write those expectations as the program's student learning outcomes.

The focus of the discussion should be on the skills (either cognitive or technical or both) and areas of knowledge that students completing three or four program courses should be able to demonstrate. Some professional organizations or accrediting organizations may have suggested guidelines for appropriate knowledge or skills for various levels of academic progress within a program. Researching the learning outcomes of similar programs at other schools can be helpful. However, program faculty at Oklahoma City Community College are the ultimate authorities on what students here should be able to know and do after they have completed most or all of their program courses.

Generally four to eight statements of student learning outcomes are recommended for a program.

If program faculty can only agree upon three outcomes or if faculty identify fifteen things that students should be able to do and can agree on those fifteen outcomes, that is fine.

However, assessment could become very burdensome with too many goals. If more than eight outcomes are identified, it might be useful to prioritize the outcomes to identify the ones that are most important to the program faculty. More important outcomes can be assessed annually; less important outcomes can be assessed less often. Through all of this, it is important to keep in mind that assessment plans are not written in stone and are expected to change over time.

Each student learning outcome statement should be as specific as possible and should preferably focus on higher-level skills. A typical outcome statement will often be in the form of "Program X students will be able to \_\_\_\_\_."

When writing an outcome statement, it might be useful to have in mind how to define or measure whether or not the expectation has been met. Keeping this in mind can help avoid outcomes that are too vague and difficult to measure. For instance, if you just say "Program X students will be able to write effectively," how would that be defined and measured? What does "effective" writing mean in your program? Is it the same in history as it is in chemistry or journalism? It might be useful to discuss the standards program faculty wish students to meet and state the outcomes in those terms. For instance, if program faculty simply want writing that is free of grammatical errors, the student learning outcome might be "Students in Program X will be able to write complete sentences that conform to standard American English." However, after two years of college, "effective" writing would hopefully have more to do with the ability to articulate an argument clearly, use vivid imagery, or support conclusions with factual information.

Bloom's taxonomy is often used when coming up with verbs for student learning outcomes statements dealing with cognitive skills. Below is a table describing cognitive objectives, starting with the lowest level at the top and progressing to more sophisticated levels as you move down the table, and example verbs for each category. The table is adapted from "Developing Learning Objectives and Assessment Plans at a Variety of Institutions: Examples and Case Studies" by Marcy H. Towns in Volume 87, No. 1 of the Journal of Chemical Education (January 2010, pp. 91-96).

<b>Cognitive Objective</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Example Verbs</b>
Knowledge	Terminology, specific facts, names	Define, describe, identify, match, state
Comprehension	Understanding	Classify, convert, describe, explain, summarize, translate
Application	Using learned information in new situations	Construct, extend, produce, solve, use, apply
Analysis	Deconstructing information to develop conclusions by making inferences, finding evidence to	Compare and contrast, correlate, differentiate, illustrate

	support conclusions	
Synthesis	Creatively applying prior knowledge and skills to produce something new	Adapt, design, devise, incorporate, validate, modify
Evaluation	Judging the value of material	Appraise, criticize, defend, interpret, justify, recommend, reframe

Technical programs will probably have at least a few student learning outcomes that are more skill or performance based although verbs such as "solve," "produce," or "construct" can certainly apply to technical programs.

Once student learning outcomes are established, it might be useful to do a curriculum mapping exercise where faculty write down or at least think about which courses provide the knowledge or practice for the skills faculty have identified as important. If a given outcome is not covered in any program courses, that is an obvious sign that either the outcome is not really important to the program or that something crucial needs to be added to a program course.

- 2) Program faculty should decide how they are going to measure each student learning outcome. Each outcome needs at least one measurement tool.

Here are just a few possible means of obtaining information about whether or not student learning outcomes are being achieved:

- national exams (if a breakdown of skills is available rather than just an overall score)
- in-house exams administered in all sections of a course
- embedded test questions appearing on an exam in all sections of a course
- final projects in a capstone course
- essays or other existing assignments in a program course

Note: A portfolio by itself is not a measurement of a learning objective. A portfolio is a collection of student work. Individual items in the portfolio can be assessed to see if learning goals are being met. Some programs require portfolios to ensure that artifacts that can be assessed are available.

An assessment plan can specify two or three different measurements for an outcome. The main goal is to have some way of collecting data to see if learning objectives are being met. National exams have the advantage of providing an objective standard that can directly speak to how well student learning outcomes are being met. However, national exams may not be appropriate or available in all areas. In-house exams, embedded test questions, and projects will need a rubric that can be used to evaluate objectively whether student learning outcomes are being met and to maintain consistency among multiple sections with multiple instructors.

- 3) Program faculty agree upon criteria for successful attainment of student learning outcomes.

Each learning outcome should have a criterion for deciding whether or not the program is producing students with the desired level of skill and knowledge. Each measurement used for a particular student learning outcome might have a different criterion for success.

Criteria for success can be somewhat arbitrary, but they do need to represent a certain level of ambition for the program. A common goal is to have a "passing grade" for the program – with 70% of students performing at an acceptable level on a given measurement of a learning outcome. If three or four years of assessment show that 80% of students are consistently performing at an acceptable level on a measurement, the criterion for success can be revised upward to reflect a new goal. On the other hand, if the faculty set 90% successful attainment of acceptable performance on a measure of an outcome and only 60% of students are reaching that level of performance, either the expectation is unrealistic and needs to be adjusted or there is a deficiency in the program that needs attention.

- 4) Program faculty decide how often each outcome needs to be assessed.

Each outcome should be assessed at least twice during a five year assessment cycle so that trend data can be collected. The whole purpose of assessment is to provide data that can be used to identify ways in which the program can be improved over time so that more students are achieving the desired outcomes at an acceptable level. Seeing trends in data about outcomes lets the program faculty know if the program is moving in the right direction. The outcomes that faculty identify as critical or central skills for program students should be assessed annually. Skills that are less critical can be assessed less frequently.

- 5) Program faculty decide upon appropriate program outputs, appropriate measures of those outputs, and criteria for success.

Program outputs are more general indicators of the quality of a program. Rather than statements of expected skills obtained through a set of program courses, program outputs are measures of overall student performance. Examples of program outputs might be pass rates on licensure exams, acceptance rates into professional schools, GPAs of program students at a transfer institution, or responses to a graduate survey to questions of how well students felt prepared to succeed at work or at a transfer institution.

- 6) Fill out the assessment plan form and submit it to your Dean or Director by the first Monday of November.

## **Section VI**

### **Examples of Outcomes, Measures, and Criteria for Success**

The following are concrete examples that can provide a model for your own student learning outcomes, measures, and criteria for success. The following are slightly modified versions of actual outcomes, measures, and criteria for success used by programs at Oklahoma City Community College.

Measures and criteria for success are usually combined on the plan and report forms. They have been separated in the following examples for added clarity.

### **From Accounting:**

*Outcome:* Graduates of the Oklahoma City Community College Accounting Program will be able to demonstrate decision-making using managerial accounting concepts.

*Measurement:* Embedded test problems covering managerial decision-making concepts will be included on the exams in all sections of ACCT 2123 in the fall and spring semesters.

*Criteria for Success:* Seventy percent of students who successfully complete ACCT 2123 (earn a passing grade) will earn an average of 70% or greater on the embedded test questions.

### **From Music:**

*Outcome:* Students will be able to sight-sing a melody similar to a hymn tune as commonly found in any standard church hymnal.

*Measurement:* Students in the final music theory course, Music Theory IV, will demonstrate the stated sight-singing skills via a *Sight-singing Evaluation Assessment*. This assessment will be evaluated by program faculty.

*Criteria for Success:* Ninety percent of the students assessed will demonstrate the stated sight-singing skills at an 80% mastery level.

### **From Chemistry:**

*Outcome:* Students will be able to develop and support conclusions drawn from an analysis of data.

*Measurement:* Students in CHEM 1215 will be able to correctly identify an unknown compound and support their conclusions with data.

*Criteria for Success:* At least 80% of students will be able to identify their unknown compound and properly use their data to write supporting statements in their conclusions.

## **Section VII**

### **A Checklist for Faculty: Is My Assessment Plan Good?**

Below is a list that program faculty can use for a self-evaluation of their assessment plan. The list is similar to what an external reviewer might look for in an assessment plan. If you can check all of the boxes, your program's assessment plan should be a good one.

- The number of student learning outcomes is reasonable. (3 to 5 is generally fine. 4 to 8 is generally the recommended number.)
- Each student learning outcome encompasses only one or two specific expectations appropriate for students completing the program.

- A reasonably knowledgeable stakeholder would recognize the student learning outcomes as being appropriate to the discipline.
- Each student learning outcome has at least one well-defined measurement.
- The measurements outlined should give us information about whether or not we are achieving the intended outcomes.
- Each outcome will be assessed at least twice during the five year period.
- The criterion for success for each outcome is reasonable and attainable.

The most important indicator of a good assessment plan is:

- The outcomes, measurements, and criteria for success should give us information that we can use to evaluate the quality of our program and whether or not we need to change the content of courses or other aspects of our program.

## **Section VIII**

### Frequently Asked Questions

The following section attempts to provide answers to specific questions as a means to further understanding of the whole process.

**Q. Isn't it the bottom line that assessment results could be used against me, the classroom teacher?**

A. The emphasis on student learning means that assessment is concerned about the content of a course or program and not the delivery method. Faculty members in an academic department or program, interpreting the results of an assessment measure, might collectively decide to give more attention to a certain skill, competency, or knowledge area, and might even recommend changes in pedagogy, but they cannot compel the behavior of a given instructor.

**Q. Why isn't the grade I give a student sufficient assessment?**

A. Outcomes assessment expands the scope of inquiry from the individual student (who will continue to be individually assessed in courses) to a program level. Therefore, it is the aggregate performance of students as a group (even if in a sample) which provides information on whether the program is achieving its advertised ends.

**Q. Why don't the assessment professionals just do this and produce a report?**

A. The goal of assessment is to produce results that will enable faculty to improve student learning not just to report on past performance. Only the faculty who guide the learning process can identify the intended outcomes of that process and what it is they expect to happen to/for the student. While the assessment professionals and members of the Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee can and will give helpful advice in constructing and administering the means of assessment, it is only the faculty who teach in that program who can ultimately decide what the results mean and suggest improvements.

**Q. How can you assess attitudes and understandings which are simply not quantifiable?**

A. The thrust of assessment is objective results such that anyone will know that the learning goals are being met, but this does not mean everything has to be reduced to numbers and statistics. If the program faculty identify an outcome that is not quantifiable, the process simply asks them to specify some objective means to demonstrate that the learning outcome is being achieved as intended. For instance, the Child Development program assesses their students' skills in building family and community relations. Child Development has a rubric that clearly defines how they judge students to be "superior," "competent," "developing," or "unacceptable" even though those "soft" social skills needed to build those relationships are not really quantifiable.

**Q. Do we all have to use standardized tests?**

A. While tests from outside organizations have the edge in objectivity, they are only one of many means of assessment. More importantly, they may not be valid in the judgment of the faculty who are identifying outcomes and measures and it is their judgment that counts. It may well be that an exam created by the department or a portfolio of student work would be a better tool. The assessment professionals on campus stand ready to help with a wide variety of assessment means.

**Q. Why is the Higher Learning Commission making us do assessment?**

A. Colleges are increasingly being held accountable for demonstrating the quality of their programs and the quality of student learning. Program assessment acts as a means of documenting that we, as faculty, are doing what we say we're doing for program students. While the Higher Learning Commission's emphasis on assessment may have played a role historically in us formalizing and improving our assessment process at all levels, the primary stakeholders in the assessment process are our students. Program level assessment is a valuable tool faculty can use to monitor and improve academic programs for the benefit of our students. Whether the Higher Learning Commission or the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education want us to do assessment or not should be irrelevant since we all want to provide our students the best possible education.

**Q. What is the connection among the various levels of assessment?**

A. The focus of assessment at all levels is student learning. When students enroll at Oklahoma City Community College they are assessed to determine if they need developmental classes in order to succeed in college level courses. The most significant educational interaction happens between students and instructors in the classroom where student learning is assessed within and at the end of classes. The individual class section is part of a course, and courses are parts of programs. General education outcomes outlined by the General Education Committee are assessed when a student has completed at least thirty credit hours at OCCC. Student learning is assessed again as students complete their programs to see if the overall course of study successfully meets the goals for students as set forth by the program faculty. These levels reflect different, yet interrelated, facets of the student's education.

**Q. How will assessment help improve learning?**

A. Assessment is merely a tool; however, it is a tool by which we can communicate with each other and our students about learning. Assessment does not accomplish learning, but it should provide information to faculty who may use that information to improve learning.

**Q. Are adjunct faculty involved?**

A. You bet! All faculty--full and part-time--are involved in student learning. We have many creative and dedicated adjunct faculty at OCCC, and the Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee will be planning several workshops at various times and locations to ensure everyone has an opportunity to learn about assessment.

**Q. Where can I go for help?**

A. The Center for Learning and Teaching has a variety of resources that you can use in formulating or fine-tuning your assessment plan. The Research and Assessment Department at Winona State University, headed by Dr. Susan Hatfield, has an excellent website with a wealth of online resources you can use (<http://www.winona.edu/AIR/resources.htm>). You can also consult with the Director of Curriculum and Assessment or request to meet with the leadership of the Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee for feedback and direction.

**Section IX**

Glossary of Assessment Terms

**Accountability** – The expectation of the community for the College to demonstrate that investments in education lead to measurable learning.

**Assessment** – Continuous improvement of and commitment to student learning through clear statements of student learning outcomes, explicit measures of these outcomes, established criteria for success, and defined methods of how the program will use the results.

**Assessment Plan** – A summary of assessments, including outcomes, measures, and criteria for success that will be implemented the following year.

**Assessment Report** – A summary of assessment results and how these results will be used to modify programs and increase student learning.

**Closing the Loop** – The process by which assessment results are used in program and campus-wide decisions to impact student learning.

**Criteria for Success** – Criteria indicate what is valued in students' responses, products or performances. They are the standard (guidelines, rules, characteristics, or dimensions) against which the measurement is compared.

**Curriculum Mapping** – An examination of a course sequence to determine where student learning outcomes are taught in a program curriculum.

**Measurement** – A systematic process providing meaningful, understandable, and dependable information. Measurements are sometimes also called measures.

**Outcomes** – see Student Learning Outcomes.

**Program** – An organized group of courses that lead to the awarding of a Certificate or Associate Degree.

**Program Outputs** – The demonstrable results of an academic program generally identified through indirect measures (e.g. transfer GPA or employer satisfaction).

**Student Learning Outcomes** – A body of knowledge and/or skills that a student is expected to know, think, demonstrate or apply upon program completion. When Oklahoma City Community College was founded, we called these "terminal competencies."

### **Types of Assessment**

1. **Competency-Based Assessment** – An assessment of a student's performance as compared to a specific learning objective or performance standard.
2. **Norm-Referenced Assessment** – An assessment of a student's performance or performances as compared to a larger group. Usually the larger group or "norm group" is a national sample representing a wide and diverse cross-section of students.

### **Types of Measurement**

1. **Indirect Measurement** – A measurement of program outputs using student performance information. Examples of such measures include but are not limited to: number of students successfully transferring; graduation rates; placement data; advisory committee evaluation; and feedback from students, graduates, or employers.
2. **Direct Measurement** – A measurement of student learning outcomes showing what they have learned. Examples of such measures include but are not limited to: licensure test results; capstone course portfolios; entry and exit test results.

## Appendix A

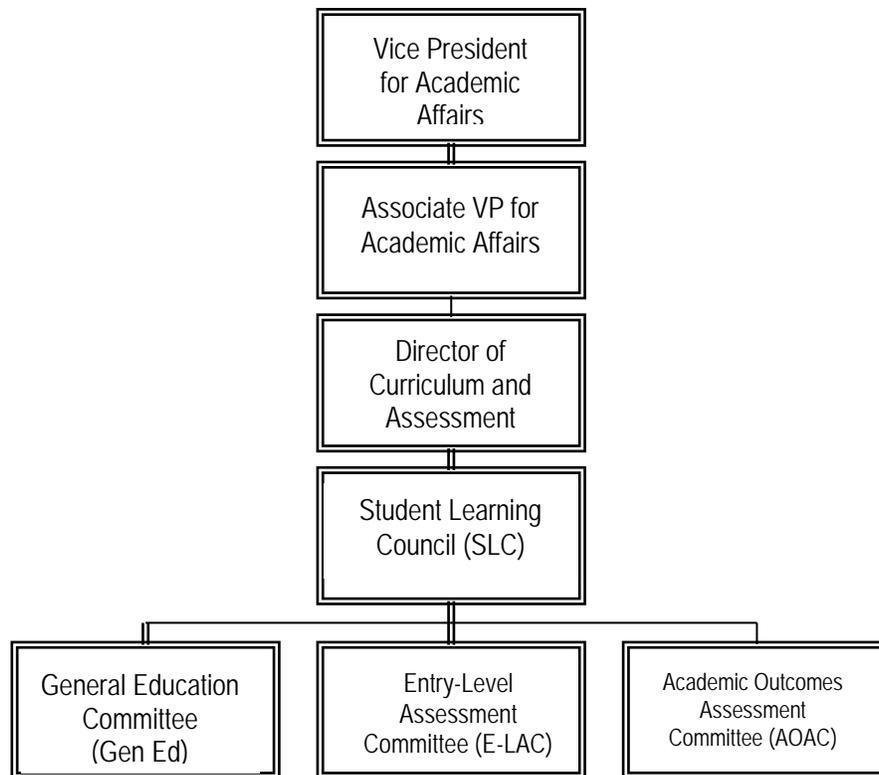
### Assessment Committees at Oklahoma City Community College

#### Philosophical Base:

Oklahoma City Community College is committed to the assessment of student learning. This is the vehicle through which the faculty demonstrate and document student learning and tie it to the overall College Mission. Assessment improves effectiveness and establishes the need for resources and development.

#### Organizational Chart:

To implement the assessment philosophy stated above the following structure has been developed.



Over the next few pages of this Assessment Handbook you will find a description of the Student Learning Council and the Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee. These are the two main groups directly related to the assessment of student learning in academic programs.

## **Student Learning Council (SLC)**

### **Purpose:**

To provide a structure and process that will ensure involvement by the entire Academic Affairs Unit in the assessment of student learning.

### **Responsibilities:**

- Members communicate to their constituency relevant assessment information.

### **Membership:**

- Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee (AOAC)
- Entry Level Assessment Committee (E-LAC)
- General Education Committee (Gen Ed)
- Deans' Council
- Director of Curriculum and Assessment

### **Meetings:**

The Director of Curriculum and Assessment will chair the semiannual SLC meetings. At the first meeting of the year, the chairpersons of the AOAC, E-LAC, and Gen Ed Committee will report on findings from the previous year and plans for the current year. At the second meeting of the year, the OCCC results from each level of assessment submitted to Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) Annual Assessment Report will be presented and the chairpersons of those committees will provide additional updates.

## **The Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee (AOAC)**

### **Purpose:**

To provide guidance to faculty and oversight for the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs in the following areas:

- developing and implementing assessment plans and reports
- analyzing and interpreting assessment results
- developing appropriate reports
- disseminating assessment results to the College community

### **Responsibilities:**

- Address issues regarding assessment of student learning
- Review and make recommendations regarding the process of program assessment to the Vice President or Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Periodically review assessment and program review documents
- Communicate recommendations concerning program assessment to the appropriate academic dean, director, or program faculty
- Keep the *Handbook for Program Outcomes Assessment* current

The AOAC will consider issues related to program outcomes assessment at the request of the Vice President or Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Committee may also seek the consent of the Vice President or Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs to consider relevant issues. Once granted, the Committee will accept, seek out, and carefully examine information related to the issue. The Committee will develop and submit recommendations regarding the issue to the Vice President or Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs.

### **Membership:**

#### Voting Members:

- Two faculty members from each Academic Division, appointed by the Academic Dean
- One Academic Dean, appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs
- One student, appointed by the Director of Student Life

If a voting member cannot attend an AOAC meeting, a designated substitute may attend. However, the substitute may not vote on matters before the Committee. No proxy votes are allowed.

#### Resource Members:

- Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs
- One representative from the Entry Level Assessment Committee
- One representative from the General Education Committee
- Director of Institutional Effectiveness
- Director of Curriculum and Assessment
- Nonvoting Academic Deans
- Director of Center for Learning and Teaching
- One representative from Student Services, appointed by the Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services
- Others as needed

### **Organization and General Operation:**

- A. Members will be appointed prior to the Fall semester. The term of office for all voting members will be three years and will begin with the Fall Semester. One third of the membership will be appointed every year. In general, members should not serve consecutive terms. In the event that a Committee member is unable to fulfill his or her Committee obligations, including attendance, a replacement member will be chosen to complete that term of office in the same manner as his or her predecessor.
- B. The Vice President for Academic Affairs will appoint the Chair and the Vice Chair of the AOAC for a three-year term. The Chair and the Vice Chair of the Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee will be committed to assessment and knowledgeable of assessment processes. The Chair will confer with the Vice President for Academic Affairs to determine reassignment time.

- C. The Chair, with administrative assistance from the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, has the following responsibilities:
- Chair meetings
  - Identify assessment issues to be addressed by Committee
  - Communicate with faculty about assessment issues as needed
  - Provide assistance to faculty with preparing annual program assessment plans and reports as needed
  - Report at Student Learning Council meetings
  - Visit with department chairs or program directors as needed
  - Assist with assessment workshops as needed
  - Attend workshops or meetings per direction of Vice President or Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs
  - Attend division/department meetings as requested
  - Participate in department chair and program director meetings as needed
  - Meet with the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Director of Curriculum and Assessment, Director of Institutional Effectiveness, or Vice Chair as needed
- D. The Vice Chair, with administrative assistance from the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, has the following responsibilities:
- Execute functions at the direction of the Chair
  - Assume responsibility in the absence of the Chair
  - Provide assistance to faculty with preparing annual program assessment plans and reports as needed
  - Ensure all meetings are ready – minutes, agenda, etc.
  - Attend workshops or meetings per direction of the Vice President or Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs
  - Meet with the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Director of Curriculum and Assessment, Director of Institutional Effectiveness, or Chair as needed
- E. Either the Chair or the full Committee may organize subcommittees and/or ad hoc committees for the purpose of expediting particular functions which cannot be performed as appropriately in meetings of the full committee. Any such subcommittee and/or ad hoc committees will provide minutes of their meetings and/or recommendations to the Chair or full Committee so that the full membership is kept aware of their activities.
- F. Any member of the college community may attend AOAC meetings.
- G. AOAC actions require a quorum of one half of the voting members. A simple majority vote will determine a matter. Typically, an AOAC recommendation will reflect a consensus of the Committee, but each committee member will have the right to submit a dissenting opinion, which may include evidence and argument as well as additional proposals, concerns or other comments.

A dissenting opinion shall be submitted to the Chair in writing prior to the next Committee meeting. The Chair will announce at the next meeting that a dissenting opinion has been received and will be forwarded to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

H. The AOAC will periodically review its structure and function.

**Committee Actions:**

- To be included on the Committee's agenda, any proposal or issues related to program outcomes assessment for consideration must be submitted to the chairperson in writing.
- The Committee will respond in a timely fashion.

**Appendix B**

The History of Assessment at Oklahoma City Community College

Oklahoma City Community College from its beginnings in 1972 has valued assessment as a critical part of ensuring the success of students in classes and programs. Students have always been assessed upon entry into the college for class placement, in classes to determine learning, and for many programs at the completion of the program. Each program at the College is founded on a set of terminal competencies, which provide information on expected program outcomes. Course objectives can be found in the course syllabi and program competencies can be found in program review documents.

In the late 1980's there was a renewed emphasis on academic assessment activities from both The Higher Learning Commission and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. With this renewed emphasis on assessment, the College developed a process of evaluation that responded to questions concerning how successfully the College Mission was being met. A portion of this assessment included measurement of the success of students and graduates.

In the fall of 1990 an Institutional Outcomes Assessment Committee was formed. This committee's initial charge was to identify all current assessment activities in both the academic area and the support services areas and combine them into one coordinated effort. The committee was also asked to recommend additions to existing systems when a gap in the assessment processes was identified.

The Institutional Outcomes Assessment Steering Committee had three sub-committees: the Student Assessment Committee, the Instructional Program Review Committee, and the Support Services Program Review Committee. The Institutional Outcomes Assessment Steering Committee and the sub-committees met regularly from the fall of 1990 through the spring of 1994. During this time the committees designed structures to enable the College to assess outcomes across all areas of the College. The assessment results were used as one of the three inputs into the planning. The results of the previous year's plan and an environmental analysis were the other two pieces of input used to develop the Master Action Plan each year.

In addition to the review of activities and the monitoring of the use of outcomes assessment information in the institutional planning process, the Institutional Outcomes Assessment Committee provided input into the College self-study that was being developed in 1990 and 1991. The outcomes assessment plan that was developed by the committee became a part of the self-study and was reviewed by consultant/evaluators in the 1991 NCA site visit.

In the spring of 1991 the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education published its "Policy Statement on the Assessment of Students for Purposes of Instructional Improvement and State System Accountability." This policy required that each institution submit an assessment plan and report annually. The first plan developed with significant input from the Student Assessment Committee was submitted in December of 1991.

The College began in 1994 to look at the institutional planning process and the role of outcomes assessment in that process and in other areas of the institution. In the fall of 1995 the existing Institutional Outcomes Assessment Committee and the three sub-committees were disbanded and replaced by the Institutional Effectiveness Committee. This change allowed the scope of the committee to encompass all aspects of the measurement of institutional effectiveness.

During this same time period the focus of academic assessment moved from a general evaluation using indirect measures of student success and the implementation of the College Mission to a more specific assessment of student learning. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education developed its Annual Assessment Report which included information on the effectiveness of entry level assessment, mid-level assessment (General Education), program outcome assessment and student satisfaction. The Higher Learning Commission also became more focused on assessing student learning through the use of direct measures such as licensure exams, capstone courses and nationally developed assessment instruments.

The Institutional Effectiveness Committee was formed to respond to the increased need for assessment information. The Committee developed a system to measure on an ongoing basis the degree to which students met the competencies faculty identified for their program. They also developed a system to be used by support service areas that would be an assessment of how well the area was accomplishing its objectives. With these two systems in place, it became evident that the Institutional Effectiveness Committee needed to be split: one committee that would work on academic assessment and one for support service assessment. Therefore, in 1998 the Institutional Effectiveness Committee split into two subgroups which became free standing committees in 2000.

The Institutional Effectiveness Academic Committee put the following system in place to allow faculty to measure program outcomes:

- program competencies as they were presented in the five year program review formed the base for the annual outcomes assessment process.
- program faculty identify the 3 to 5 competencies they would be evaluating during the particular academic year. Over a five year period all program competencies listed in the program review document would be evaluated.

- the results of the measurement of each program competency was then summarized during the program review process (once every 5 years) at which time changes in program competencies could be made.

The Institutional Effectiveness Academic Committee reviewed each plan and report submitted, and helped department faculty to improve their assessment activities.

A review of the academic outcomes assessment system was made in December of 2001. The purpose of this review was to determine appropriate changes to the system to address both institutional concerns and those concerns expressed by the Higher Learning Commission visiting team during their November 2001 site visit. Subsequently, in 2002, the Institutional Effectiveness Academic Committee was renamed to the Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee (AOAC).

The system explained in this handbook is essentially the process that was developed for implementation with the FY 2004 cycle.

## Appendix C

### General Instructions for Providing Constructive Suggestions for Assessment Plans

**Program:**

**Date:**

**General Instructions:** When looking at the assessment plans and reports, please answer the questions below. Some of the questions require only a yes/no answer. Please make constructive suggestions if you see any areas of the plans or reports that can be improved.

1. *How many student learning outcomes are listed for the program? Is the number reasonable? (Three to five outcomes are generally fine. More than eight should generally not be necessary.)*
2. *Does each student learning outcome encompass only one or two expectations or are individual outcomes overly broad and try to cover too many areas/skills? Can you suggest how statements of the student learning outcomes can be improved?*
3. *Would a reasonably knowledgeable stakeholder recognize the student learning outcomes as being appropriate to the discipline?*
4. *Does each student learning outcome have at least one well-defined measurement?*
5. *Should the measurements outlined give information about whether or not the intended outcomes are being achieved?*
6. *Does the plan indicate that each outcome will be assessed at least twice during the five year period of the plan?*
7. *Is the criterion for success for each outcome reasonable and attainable?*
8. *In your opinion, should the measurements and criteria for success in the plan give program faculty information that they can use to evaluate the quality of their program and whether or not they need to change the content of courses or other aspects of their program.*
9. *Do the program outputs seem appropriate for the program? Can you suggest additional outputs that might be appropriate?*
10. *What constructive suggestions can you offer on how to improve the assessment plan, especially in the above areas where the response was "No"?*
11. *Is there evidence in the assessment report of the collection and use of trend data for program evaluation?*
12. *Is there evidence in the assessment report document that decisions about the program (resources, curricula, etc.) are being influenced by the assessment process? If so, how?*

**Additional comments or suggestions:**