Annual Outcomes Assessment

Academic Programs & Administrative, Educational, and Student Support Services (AES Units)

A Brief Overview

CAL U

December 15, 2020

What is outcomes assessment?

According to Palomba and Banta (1999), outcomes assessment involves the **systematic collection, review, and use of evidence or information related to student learning.**

Assessment helps faculty and program administrators understand **how well students are mastering the most important knowledge and skills** in the degree program.

What is outcomes assessment?

Outcomes assessment is <u>not</u> limited to academic programs:

In addition to academic programs, Middle States requires the periodic assessment of:

- programs **supporting the student experience,**

- programs **providing student learning opportunities**, and

- **administrative units** (collectively, these are Administrative, Educational, and Student Support Service units, or AES units).

In AES units, outcomes assessment also refers to any effort to **gather, analyze, and interpret evidence** that describes **institutional, departmental, divisional, or unit effectiveness.**

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

SLOs are clear statements in specific and measurable terms of what a student will know, value, or be able to do as the result of having successfully completed a program or course of study.

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Assessment of SLOs is the process of investigating…

1) *what* students are learning,

2) *how well* they are learning it in relation to expected learning outcomes of academic programs

"[SLO assessment is] the systematic collection of information about student learning, using the time, knowledge, expertise, and resources available, in order to inform decisions about how to improve learning"

(Barbara Walvoord, *Assessment Clear and Simple*)

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AES Unit Outcomes (AESOs)

AESOs answer how the University – including students, faculty, and staff – benefits from utilizing the services or functions provided by these units.

They may include Service Area Outcomes and Administrative and Support Unit Outcomes.

Assessment in AES Units

Units in administrative, educational, and student support services assess AESOs and SLOs where applicable.

AESOs should be not only indicative of efficiency and quality of service, but also focus on what their target audience knows, can do, or values because of interacting with staff.

Depending on the unit, AES assessment may include investigating…

- Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

- Service Area Outcomes (SAOs): what students are expected to achieve and be able to demonstrate in terms of knowledge, skills, and values upon completion of receiving a service, attending a workshop, or participating in a program.

- Administrative and Support Unit Outcomes (AUOs): what the unit's target audience will be able to do as a result of interacting with staff. These outcomes encompass efficiency and quality of service, as well as Middle States success measures (ex. retention, completion, post-grad education/employment).

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What does Middle States expect regarding assessment?

- One of the four foundational principles guiding the revised Standards was to "emphasize institutional assessment and assessment of student learning."

  - Assessment is built into **every MSCHE Standard**, as well as **Requirements of Affiliation 8, 9, and 10**.

  - The **final Criterion of each Standard** requires documented evidence of the use of assessment processes.

Adapted from MSCHE Self-Study: Creating a Useful Process and Report, 2018

✓ Priority should be placed on meaningfulness, not methodological perfection.

✓ Assessment results should be used to inform budgeting and planning at all levels of the institution.

✓ Assessment is expected to be systematic, meaningful, useful, and efficient.

✓ The process should occur periodically, be pervasively implemented, and be conducted in substantial measure.

Adapted from "The New Standards for Accreditation: Understanding Middle States Expectations for Assessment
Sean McKitrick, Vice President, MSCHE, 2015 February 5

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For the purposes of annual outcomes assessment, Cal U complies with the Middle States expectation that "academic programs" includes all undergraduate and graduate academic program majors, concentrations, and certificates.

Middle States expects that the assessment process includes the majority of academic and non-academic units. The process should be comparable and occur across educational modalities and across institutional units.

The goal of outcomes assessment is **continuous improvement.**

Remember that assessment links student performance to specific learning outcomes in order to provide useful information to instructors and students about student achievement.

Annual assessment at Cal U

The annual assessment process at Cal U applies to both academic programs and AES units:

- All academic programs and AES units are required to **participate annually in a two-step assessment process,** with a comprehensive *Assessment Plan Report* prepared at the beginning of the Fall semester and a final *Assessment Results Report* near the end of the Spring semester.

- SLOs and AESOs drive the development of annual assessment plans for each academic program and AES unit, with **at least two outcomes assessed annually**.

- The *Assessment Results Report* is completed in the Spring once data has been collected, reviewed, and discussed, and after an action plan for continuous improvement has been identified.

Assessment Plan Report Requirements

- Program/unit mission statement

- At least **2** student learning or AES unit outcomes assessed **each year**
  - ✓ At least **2** methods of measurement used for **each outcome**
    - At least **1** of these methods must be a **direct/objective measure**. The other can either be direct or **indirect/subjective.**
  - ✓ **1** criterion for success for **each measure**

- Mapping: alignment of **each** SLO/AESO to:
  1) MSCHE "Essential Skills",
  2) University Mission/Strategic Plan,
  3) Cal U Gen Ed Outcome Areas (applies only to undergraduate programs and relevant student support units)

- Related documents: rubrics, surveys, meeting minutes, etc.

Assessment Results Report Requirements

Four required sections:

- results (a summary of your numerical results -- ex. total number of participants, mean, standard deviation),

- analysis (a statement of whether you met your criteria or not, as well as any other information you may have gleaned as a result of assessment and general discussion about the results, such as limitations or other observations),

- action plan (whether there were issues with the assessment itself, or areas of weakness in the department revealed by the assessment process, and how you plan to address them. This is part of the Continuous Improvement), and

- statement of impact of any action plan items from last year's assessment that you applied this year. (Your Continuous Excellence Plan may be part of this statement).

Funding Requests (Optional)

NOTE: At the end of the *Results Report*, academic programs and AES units have the opportunity to request funding directly linked to SLO or AESO results and action plans.

While not required, if institutional funding is needed to improve SLO or AESO performance, programs and units may complete and submit a Middle States Requirement of Affiliation #10 funding request for <u>consideration</u> by the University Strategic Assessment Committee (USAC) and <u>approval</u> by the University Budget and Planning Committee.

A note on small sample sizes:

- Describe the data that you have and what it suggests, then indicate its limitations in your Analysis of Results.

- Consider taking your annual data and reviewing it again as part of a multi-year cycle to look for meaningful trends. Trend data is desirable for decision-making **(closing the assessment loop).**

- Assessment of SLOs and ASOs does not require statistical significance to be meaningful. **The use of the data is key.**

- Even if the data seem too small to analyze or to be reliable, results can still be considered for general improvement.

August/September:

- Department meeting: academic programs and AES units review and revise their mission statements, determine which outcomes will be measured for the assessment cycle, how those outcomes will be measured, and standards for achievement. Action plans from previous assessment cycles are reviewed and implemented.

October 1st:

- Using the *Assessment Plan Report* Template as a guide, academic program and AES unit <u>Assessment Leaders</u> review current assessment plans in Nuventive or enter new ones. Assessment Leaders notify the Director of IE via email that their plans are ready for review. Programs begin gathering data.

November-March:

- Programs adjust their *Plan Reports* in response to feedback from Academic Program Assessment Committee (APAC), Administrative & Educational Support Assessment Committee (AESAC), the General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC) & IE Leadership Team.

March/April:

- Department meeting: program and service areas aggregate and review their data, analyze the results, and identify strengths and areas of concern. Strategies are discussed to address concerns, and an action plan is devised for continuous improvement.

April 15th:

- Using the *Assessment Results Report* Template as a guide, Assessment Leaders enter *Results Reports* into Nuventive. Requests for additional funding based directly on assessment results are also entered into Nuventive to be reviewed for consideration by the University Strategic Assessment Committee (USAC) and approval by the University Budget & Planning Committee.

April/May:

- Action plan is adjusted for improvement in response to appropriate assessment committee and IE Leadership Team feedback.

There is room for flexibility in the timeline due dates:

- You may find that you need to **adjust the timeline to suit your unit/program's individual assessment needs**. Reasons for extensions or adjustments most commonly include:

  - One or more of your means of measurement are dependent on end-of-semester projects, such as capstones, and the April 15th results report due date is not possible

  - Your AES unit requires alignment with the fiscal year, and using the academic year as a timeline will not allow for complete data

- However, <u>unless you have already discussed and confirmed a different timeline with the Director of IE</u>, the official assessment cycle timeline applies for all AES units/programs. Additionally, any deviation from the official timeline needs to be discussed and approved prior to <u>each</u> new assessment cycle.

Questions?

Contact AVP for Assessment and Accreditation
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or
Director of Institutional Effectiveness
(Alice Jenkins, jenkins_a@calu.edu)

Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness

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