

NUMBER: ACAF 3.00 (NEW)
SECTION: Academic Affairs
SUBJECT: Assessment of Student Learning
DATE: January 26, 2017
Policy for: Columbia and Regional Campuses
Procedure for: Columbia and Regional Campuses
Authorized by: Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
Issued by: Office of the Provost

I. Policy

The purpose of this document is to clarify the processes and responsibilities for the assessment of student learning within educational programs at the University of South Carolina. The assessment of student learning is a quality assurance process aimed at continuous improvement. As such, it is required by the institution's regional accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

A. Definitions

1. Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements that describe, in measurable terms, the knowledge, skills, and/or abilities that students are expected to demonstrate. Learning outcomes should clearly support the mission of the educational program.

2. Assessment Measures

Assessment measures indicate the extent to which students demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and abilities they have gained from an academic course, program, or experience, relating to a particular learning outcome. The measurement of student performance is accomplished through the evaluation of student artifacts, the collective results of which are used to determine the level of mastery of the learning outcomes. Examples of artifacts may include course assignments, projects, exam questions, lab activities or reports, papers, portfolios, or clinical experiences.

3. Learning Outcomes Assessment

Learning outcomes assessment helps create a shared academic culture dedicated to ensuring and improving the quality of higher education. It is an ongoing

process aimed at measuring and improving student learning. This process includes:

- a. Setting explicit, public expectations (i.e., outcomes) for student learning.
- b. Systematically gathering, analyzing and interpreting evidence to determine how well student performance matches those expectations.
- c. Using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance.

4. Educational Programs

Educational programs include all undergraduate and graduate majors, graduate certificate programs, and the undergraduate general education curriculum known as the Carolina Core.

B. Policy Oversight

On each campus, the chief academic officer is responsible for ensuring that all academic programs undergo annual learning outcomes assessment. The Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation on the Columbia campus is responsible for collecting and reviewing the academic program assessment plan documentation for all campuses.

II. Procedures

A. Responsibility for Implementation

1. General Education Assessment

In accordance with Faculty Senate procedures relating to course approvals, matters related to objectives, goals, requirements, and general education are the responsibility of the University Faculty Senate. Faculty Senate consideration of these matters should follow consideration and recommendation by the Carolina Core Committee. The Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Analytics, in consultation with the Faculty Senate, plans and implements the institution-level general education assessment process.

Results of assessment of general education learning outcomes are reported by the Carolina Core Committee to department chairs and deans. Department chairs with courses in general education component areas are responsible for working together with the relevant Carolina Core Specialty Teams to determine how data are used to make improvements within general education curriculum.

2. Undergraduate Program Assessment

The faculty who deliver the undergraduate program are responsible for matters related to learning outcome development; development or identification of assessment measures; collection of assessment data; changes to the assessment, curriculum, and/or the program, based on evaluation of assessment data; and reporting on assessment results. The faculty who deliver the undergraduate programs are responsible for using assessment data to make improvements to course delivery and program curriculum related to learning outcomes data (ACAF 2.00 I.A.2).

The Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Analytics is responsible for supporting good assessment practice and documenting assessment processes for institutional and external reporting needs.

Each undergraduate program should have defined program learning outcomes that are summative of the curriculum of the program. The program learning outcomes are published in the Undergraduate Bulletin, in accordance with policy [ACAF 3.50](#).

Each program learning outcome should have associated measures of student learning through which each program is able to ascertain the degree to which students have achieved the student learning outcomes.

Each undergraduate program is responsible for ongoing measurement of student learning outcomes and reporting results to OIRAA annually, or as otherwise scheduled.

3. Graduate Major and Graduate Certificate Program Assessment

The faculty who deliver the graduate major and graduate certificate programs are responsible for matters related to learning outcome development; development or identification of assessment measures; collection of assessment data; changes to the assessment, curriculum, and/or the program, based on evaluation of assessment data; and reporting on assessment results. The faculty who deliver the graduate major and graduate certificate programs are responsible for using assessment data to make improvements to course delivery and program curriculum related to learning outcomes data (ACAF 2.00, I.A.2).

The Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Analytics is responsible for supporting good assessment practice and documenting assessment processes for institutional and external reporting needs.

Each graduate major and graduate certificate program should have defined program learning outcomes that are summative of the curriculum of the program. The program learning outcomes are published in the Graduate Bulletin, in accordance with policy [ACAF 3.50](#).

Each program learning outcome should have associated measures of student learning through which each program is able to ascertain the degree to which students have achieved the student learning outcomes.

Each graduate major and graduate certificate program is responsible for ongoing measurement of student learning outcomes and reporting results to OIRAA annually, or as otherwise scheduled.

	Undergraduate Programs	Graduate Major and Graduate Certificate Programs	Undergraduate General Education Curriculum
Implementation	Program Faculty	Program Faculty	Carolina Core Faculty
Administrative Oversight	OIRAA	OIRAA	OIRAA
Reporting	Program Faculty via Assessment Plan Composer report	Program Faculty via Assessment Plan Composer report	Carolina Core Committee and OIRAA
Evaluation	Department Chair or School Director and OIRAA	Department Chair or School Director and OIRAA	Carolina Core Committee and OIRAA

4. Criteria for Evaluating Good Practice

While allowing for significant differences in assessment practices among disciplines, in order to be relevant and useful to departments and programs, assessment procedures should meet the following criteria:

- a. Programs should have clearly defined and measurable student learning outcomes that focus on knowledge, skills, and competencies.
- b. Assessment measures should clearly address the degree to which students attain the defined learning outcomes.
- c. Assessment measures should be independent from course grades and teaching evaluations.
- d. Multiple methods of assessing outcomes should be used, including at least one direct measure of student learning.
- e. Data and information should be collected and analyzed longitudinally, as well as in each reporting cycle.
- f. The analysis of data should result in findings relevant to the program.
- g. Improvements in the program should be planned and enacted in response to the findings.
- h. The faculty who teach in the program should be involved in defining the learning outcomes, selecting the related assessment measures, analyzing the results, and determining appropriate improvements in the program.

New and revised assessment plans submitted for approval are evaluated in light of these criteria.

III. Related Policies

ACAF 2.00 Creation and Revision of Academic Programs

ACAF 3.50 Academic Bulletins and Planning Calendar

SACS Commission on Colleges, *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, 2012 Edition*, Comprehensive Standards 3.3.1.1 and 3.5.1