

East Georgia State College
Academic Year 2020-21
Academic Program Assessment Guide

Introduction

This guide has been prepared to be used by academic program coordinators and by faculty who teach in academic disciplines that offer associate and baccalaureate degree programs. The EGSC SACSCOC institutional liaison will work with the school deans, program coordinators, and faculty to assure that an effective program assessment system is maintained.

Academic Assessment and Continuous Improvement

Academic Assessment is the continuous process of examining student learning to improve it. Two useful distinctions about assessment are commonly made. The first is the distinction between formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment focuses on supporting the improvement of learning, while summative assessment focuses on evaluating the quality of learning attained. The second distinction is between direct and indirect assessment. Direct assessment focuses on faculty evaluation of student performance. Examples include student papers, presentations and other class activities, portfolios, pre and post-tests, and assessment embedded tests. Indirect assessment focuses on student satisfaction or perception of performance. Examples include internal satisfaction and external engagement surveys, such as the *Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)*, and course evaluations.

Having an active and effective assessment process is a priority for institutional accreditation agencies such as SACSCOC. SACSCOC articulates its commitment to academic program assessment through the following comprehensive standard:

8.2 The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in the areas below:

a. Student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs.

(Student outcomes: educational programs)

As described by Barbara E. Walvoord in *Assessment Clear and Simple*, to be effective assessment should be a natural three step process of 1) determining student learning outcomes, 2) gathering information about the extent those outcomes are being achieved, and 3) taking action to improve student learning.

According to Walvoord, common pitfalls to an effective assessment process include 1) gathering information without using it to improve student learning, 2) making the assessment process too complicated, and 3) treating assessment primarily as a compliance exercise. SACSCOC emphasizes its institutional effectiveness principles to encourage continuous effort toward improvement rather than the attainment of some ideal state of student learning where continuous

improvement is now longer needed. As such, academic assessment should be used to identify obstacles to student learning as they are discovered and remove them. Documented evidence of this ongoing process is what constitutes institutional effectiveness. Seen from this perspective, being judged in compliance with accreditation principles should be an expected byproduct of an effective assessment system rather than as the purpose for assessment.

Program Assessment

A vigorous and ongoing process of program assessment is essential for assuring the effectiveness of degree programs. Like all student learning outcomes, program student learning outcomes should be measurable.

The academic program coordinator provides the leadership necessary to assure the viability of a program of study, as describe in the following SACSCOC comprehensive standard.

6.2. For each of its educational programs, the institution . . .

c. Assigns appropriate responsibility for program coordination.
(*Program coordination*)

EGSC academic program coordinators have the following responsibilities:

1. to assure that the faculty have established an approved program learning outcome for the program they coordinate.
2. to craft and have the faculty approve a plan of assessment of those outcomes (including the specific direct and indirect assessment measures independent of course grades which will be used).
3. to assure that the approved course objectives for each course further the program outcomes in a meaningful way.
4. to oversee the process of implementing the assessment plan – e.g., collect the data each semester/record the assessment results/report the assessment results.
5. to discuss the assessment results with faculty and facilitate discussions of how the program will be improved based on assessment results.
6. to maintain records of specific changes made based on assessment results.

As indicated in the list above, the faculty who teach courses in an academic discipline associated with a program of study support the academic coordinator's efforts to maintain, assess, and realize the student learning outcomes that guide the assessment of that program. Each academic coordinator should meet with the appropriate discipline specific faculty at least twice each year.

- First, discipline coordinators meet with the appropriate faculty at the beginning of the fall semester to ensure faculty know what program SLOs are the focus of assessment for academic year and what assessment methods will be used.

- Second, the coordinators meet with faculty prior to the end of the spring semester to discuss the results of assessment activities and the actions needed to be taken to improve student learning. Program coordinators and faculty also will agree on the program SLOs that will be the focus of assessment activities during the upcoming academic year.

During the academic year, program coordinators will work with faculty members to assure that the program's academic assessment plan is implemented effectively. These activities include:

- Determining the program SLOs to be assessed in the academic year
- Determining in what courses the selected program SLOs will be assessed
- Identifying the method(s) to be used to assess each program SLO
- Assigning faculty in specific course sections to conduct the assessments
- Collecting, analyzing, and reporting assessment results

Program Student Learning Outcomes

For academic degree programs, assessment of student learning outcomes at the program of study level should focus on the key outcomes (i.e., the specific things that students should know and be able to do when they complete the program) that prepare students to succeed in advancing to the next degree level in a program of study and/or in performing well in an occupation that requires this program of study.

Following Walvoord's advice, based on the continuous monitoring of a program's SLOs, action should be taken each academic year to improve student learning. Based on the assessment results, the academic program coordinator working with faculty should identify what changes should be made to the program curriculum and to specific courses to improve student learning.

Program Assessment Plans and Assessment Reports

With the support of the College's institutional SACSCOC liaison, academic program coordinators will maintain an assessment record for their program of study. The primary documents of record are the program assessment plans and program assessment annual reports. Templates for these plans and reports accompany this guide and are presented below.

Academic Program:

Program Coordinator:

EGSC School:

Date:

Academic Program Assessment Data Maintenance and Collection Plan

Program Learning Outcome (PLO) (List each learning outcome in your plan)	Assessment Methods (List the specific assessment methods to be used to determine whether each outcome has been attained)	Detailed Descriptions of Assessment Methods (Define each assessment method so there is no ambiguity about the meaning of your measure.)	Compilation/Maintenance of Assessment Results (Assessment results need to be compiled consistently from year to year. Establish responsibility for compiling and maintaining results.)

Plan for Annual Analysis of Academic Program Assessment Results

Program Learning Outcome (PLO) (List each learning outcome in your plan)	Assessment Methods (List the specific assessment methods to be used to determine whether each outcome has been attained)	Person Responsible for Analysis (List by title, not name, the individual responsible to analyze assessment data of that learning outcome and present recommendations for change if needed.)	Process to be used to Make Decisions about Changes Needed (Describe briefly the process your program will use to determine the specific changes to be made.)

East Georgia State College Program Assessment Annual Report

Program:

School:

Program Coordinator: Name:

Phone:

Email Address:

Academic Year:

Date Submitted:

Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)	Course(s) Assessed	Assessment Methods (List the specific assessment methods used to determine whether each outcome has been attained)	Direct/Indirect	Assessment Results (Summarize assessment results for each assessment method.)	Action Needed (Describe specific actions that have been taken in response to results.)
PLO 1: Benchmark:					
PLO 2: Benchmark:					
PLO 3: Benchmark:					
PLO 4: Benchmark:					
PLO 5: Benchmark:					