

# Marquette University

## STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT POLICIES

### MISSION

Marquette University's assessment system is guided by the University's mission of excellence, faith, leadership and service. The assessment process actively promotes a culture of continuous improvement in academic and co-curricular outcomes. This is accomplished through the implementation of an assessment system that is meaningful, manageable, sustainable, and leads to the fulfillment of the teacher-learner objectives envisioned by Jesuit pedagogy. Assessment provides guidance, assistance and technical expertise to ensure that student learning and development outcomes in all curricular and co-curricular programs are defined, measured and improved.

### DEFINITIONS

Assessment at Marquette is defined as "the systematic collection of information about student learning in order to inform decisions about how to improve learning." (Barbara E. Walvoord, *Assessment Clear and Simple*, (2004). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley and Sons, p. 2.)

Assessment of student learning outcomes occurs at multiple levels: the course, major, program or unit, core curriculum, co-curricular program or experience, and institutional levels; and for undergraduate, graduate and professional students.

The assessment cycle consists of: Developing and articulating observable and measurable student learning outcomes; gathering direct and indirect evidence about how well students are meeting learning goals; reflecting on the implications of the evidence for informing decisions about student learning and development; making warranted changes in the course, program, curriculum or institution to enhance learning; and assessing the impact of these changes.

### PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT

- The primary purpose for assessment is the assurance and improvement of student learning and development; results are intended to inform decisions about course and program content, delivery, and pedagogy.
- Assessment is a collaborative activity, involving all constituents with a stake in improving student learning. The faculty and staff who deliver the programs and services have primary responsibility for the development and implementation of assessment activities and ongoing use of student learning and development results.
- To be meaningful, assessment must address issues and questions that people care about. The point of assessment is not to complete a report, but to return evidence that relevant parties will find enlightening and useful for guiding decisions about programs.

- In a cohesive assessment system, learning goals are integrated; institutional goals are seeded into program level outcomes, and these, in turn, are seeded into courses and co-curricular experiences. Alignment is demonstrated through curricular mapping, indicating where and how students are provided opportunities to learn and demonstrate proficiency.
- Goals involving attitudes, values and personal transformation are more difficult to assess than knowledge and performance skills. Assessment of student outcomes in these areas should not be abandoned, however, as long as opportunities for developing these outcomes can be identified in the students' educational experience.
- Good assessment starts with a decision on what to measure and then determines how to measure, rather than the other way around.
- To be manageable and sustainable, assessments that are embedded in existing student work are preferable to add-on assignments. Where assessments beyond curricular or co-curricular requirements are appropriate, steps are taken to maximize student participation and encourage their best efforts.
- There is no perfect assessment instrument; capturing the complexity of student learning requires identifying multiple methods of assessment that incorporate direct and indirect measures, and qualitative and quantitative methods.
- Assessment by itself is an insufficient condition for learning and improvement; the information produced by assessment must be carefully reflected and acted upon.
- Because the goal of assessment is program improvement, data from program assessments are used to evaluate students as a group. Program assessment data is not used to evaluate individual students, faculty or staff.
- Recognizing that assessment helps educators meet their responsibilities to various constituencies, assessment plans and results are regularly and appropriately shared with internal and external audiences.
- The assessment process itself is regularly evaluated and refined as insights emerge.

## RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ASSESSMENT

Assessment is a shared responsibility among Marquette University faculty, academic leaders, administrators and students.

For assessment in the formal academic curriculum, **each full-time and part-time faculty member** is responsible for direct assessment of student learning in each course taught and for assisting program faculty in assessment of program learning outcomes as needed. Each course will have clearly stated learning objectives and evaluation of student learning linked to these objectives. Active participation in and contributions to assessment planning and assessment processes will be viewed favorably in annual evaluations.

For co-curricular programs and experiences that contribute to student learning, **program administrators** are responsible for articulating desired learning outcomes, designing experiences that assist students with meeting these learning goals, and for designing and implementing assessment measures that provide evidence of program effectiveness and student learning. Program administrators are then responsible for routinely using assessment data to make appropriate improvements that maximize program effectiveness and student learning. Student learning assessment is tied to other forms of needs assessment and program evaluation and these data collectively inform planning and fiscal decisions.

**Undergraduate, graduate and professional students** are responsible for participation in the approved learning outcome assessment processes of their major, program, college, co-curricular activities, and the university. Students are expected to complete various assessment measures, both direct and indirect, to the best of their ability. Students may be selected to participate in program or university assessment measures which require students' time and effort beyond required course assignments. Any measures that require time and effort beyond course assignments will be approved by the program faculty for any program assessment requirements or the University Assessment Committee, and the Provost for an institutional requirement.

**Program Assessment Leaders** are responsible for coordination of the assessment processes in their designated programs (university common core, college core, major, certificate, post-baccalaureate, graduate, professional and co-curricular) These processes include: Defining measurable student learning and development outcomes; broad dissemination of these outcomes in web-based and print documents; collecting and summarizing data on student learning and development; disseminating results to faculty and staff for discussion; and formally reporting results and areas for improvement to the university's assessment reporting system.

**The administrator of each academic and co-curricular unit** (dean, chairperson, program director) is responsible for ensuring that: Learning objectives are defined in each course syllabus; statements of measurable student learning outcomes are defined for each major, degree program, certificate or co-curricular program; outcomes are mapped to the courses, assignments and experiences that contribute to achieving the learning outcomes; coordination, dissemination and reporting processes are carried out by the unit's designated program assessment leader(s).

**The Core Curriculum Review Committee** is responsible for directing and overseeing the assessment of the core of common studies courses, knowledge areas and overall learning outcomes.

**The University Assessment Committee** is responsible for decisions regarding the development, support and implementation of the institutional assessment system and the monitoring of the quality of assessment activity of academic and co-curricular programs.

**The University Assessment Director** is responsible for coordinating all aspects of campus assessment, including efforts associated with institutional learning outcomes, the university core of common studies, curricular and co-curricular programs. The director assists units, as needed, with planning, designing, implementing, analyzing, reporting and disseminating assessment results. The director promotes best practices in assessment and delivers regular assessment training for campus stakeholders.

## **ASSESSMENT SUPPORT AND RESOURCES**

**The Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs and Teaching** is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the university's assessment processes are effectively carried out, and providing the resources necessary to do so.

**The Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning** provides guidance to faculty and graduate teaching assistants in the effective delivery of instruction to achieve student learning outcomes. In collaboration with the University Assessment Director, the Center helps stakeholders define program goals and determine where they are introduced, reinforced and assessed throughout the curriculum.

**The Office of Institutional Research** provides technical support and data analysis services for academic units, along with pertinent results from campus-wide surveys that may inform their assessment results.

**The Division of Student Affairs Assessment Team** provides resources, training, and support to departments, administrators, and graduate students who are responsible for co-curricular assessment, including learning outcomes assessment, program evaluation and review, and needs assessment. In collaboration with designated individuals from the Division of Student Affairs, the Assessment Team coordinates campus-wide survey/assessment measures and shared reporting of results.

Approved by the University Assessment Committee: March 2, 2012

Approved by the Provost: March 5, 2012