

Marquette University

Student Learning Assessment Procedures and Policies

Marquette University, as a Catholic, Jesuit university is dedicated to serving God by serving our students and contributing to the advancement of knowledge. Our vision is to provide a Catholic, Jesuit education that is genuinely transformational such that our students graduate not simply better educated but better people, and to do so with excellence.

To fulfill this vision Marquette faculty and staff are committed to an on-going process of assessment, reflection, and improvement of student learning. At Marquette we view assessment of learning as a natural concern of the teacher-scholar, a concern rooted in Jesuit pedagogy. This document defines how assessment is implemented at Marquette including the definition of learning assessment, the assessment process, the goals of assessment, responsibilities for assessment, a time-line for implementation of the full assessment system, and institutional supports for assessment.

A. Assessment of Student Learning

1. Assessment of student learning/learning assessment will be 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.)
2. Assessment of student learning will be conducted at three levels; course, major, program, or unit, and institution. Emphasis will be on learning assessment at the program and institutional levels.
3. Assessment is a cycle (a.k.a. assessment steps, assessment system, assessment process) consisting of :
 - a. articulating goals for student learning,
 - b. gathering direct and indirect evidence about how well students are meeting the goals,
 - c. reflection on the implications of the evidence for course, program, and institutional supports for learning and
 - d. making changes in the institution to enhance learning.

B. Goals of Assessment

A comprehensive set of assessment systems will assist faculty, administration, and support staff to:

1. Ensure that every academic program including undergraduate majors, common core curricula, certification programs, and graduate programs has specified learning outcomes and a system of assessment to measure these outcomes.

2. Support and implement continuous curricular and extra-curricular improvements which will assist Marquette University in achieving the university vision.
3. Establish a reporting process at the institutional level for assessment data to support periodic program review and strategic planning.
4. Develop a shared culture of student-learning-focused assessment throughout the university.

C. Responsibilities

Developing assessment processes and the use of assessment data for planning and evaluation has been and will continue to be a central focus for Marquette University faculty, academic leaders, and administrators. Active participation in and contributions to assessment planning and assessment processes will be viewed favorably in annual evaluations.

Course and Program Assessments

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.

Undergraduate and graduate students are responsible for participation in the approved learning outcome assessment processes of their major, program, college, and the university. Students are expected to complete various assessment measures (e.g. assignments, surveys, demonstrations, writing samples and focus group discussions) 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.

Each academic unit, (college/school, department, and program) and each distinct curricular program (university common core, college core, major, certificate, post-baccalaureate and graduate), is responsible for assessment of student learning. Each unit will have one or more designated Program Assessment Leaders who will coordinate the assessment processes. Each unit develops and implements an assessment system that includes:

1. measurable learning outcomes for students in each major and graduate program,
2. broad publication of these outcomes in program advising sheets, course descriptions, course syllabi, and printed and web-based catalogs and program descriptions.
3. a defined and specified assessment system (process) to:

- a. define and collect data on student learning,
 - b. measure student learning in a reliable and valid manner, (any measures that require student time and effort beyond course assignments will be approved by the program faculty in advance),
 - c. summarize the data in quantitative and qualitative analyses,
 - d. disseminate the data and analyses on a regularly scheduled basis,
 - e. incorporate discussion by faculty of assessment findings on a scheduled basis to identify areas for improvement in teaching and learning, and
 - f. implement changes for the continuous improvement of the program.
4. reports of student learning assessment data and implemented change provided on a regular basis through the college Dean to the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and the Provost.

The administrator of each academic and co-curricular unit such as Dean, Chairperson, and Program Director is responsible for ensuring that:

1. courses have learning objectives that are written in each course syllabi.
2. each major, degree program or co-curricular program has statements of measurable student learning outcomes and can identify what courses and/or learning experiences contribute to the program learning outcomes.
3. the unit assessment plan for the assessment cycle is implemented each year.
4. program and unit assessment data reports are disseminated.

Institutional Assessment

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 Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs and Teaching working with the Assoc. Vice Provost for Institutional Research and Assessment is responsible for ensuring that:

1. undergraduate and graduate institutional learning outcomes are developed and continuously assessed.
2. assessment reports regarding institutional learning outcomes are prepared and disseminated.
3. actions to improve the learning of all students enrolled at Marquette are identified, implemented and evaluated.

D. Assessment Definitions at Marquette University

Academic unit. An academic unit is a general term and refers to a college or school, a program, and/or a department within academic administration. Each academic unit will have at least one assessment system.

Assessment measures. Assessment measures are the measurement tools that will be used to evaluate student learning. The measure covers one or more of the performance indicators for a given learning outcome, such as a project, writing sample, research report

or clinical assessment form. Assessment measures can be categorized as direct or indirect.

- a. Direct measures are measurement tools which require the students to demonstrate the learning and are examined by other individuals using a set of criteria to determine the level of learning exhibited. Direct measures are considered objective measures of student learning.
- b. Indirect measures are measurement tools which obtain data relevant to student learning without requiring the student to actually demonstrate the learning. Self reports, job placement rates, and the NSSE are examples of indirect measures.

Assessment system. An assessment system is a detailed description of the process used to implement a cycle of assessment supporting continuous program or curricular improvement. At a minimum, this system consists of specified student learning outcomes, performance indicators for the achievement of each learning outcome, measures of assessment (tools and methods), a structure for data collection and analyses, and a structure for use of assessment results for curricular improvement

Co-curricular Program. Co-curricular programs are planned activities and formal programs that add to and support the student learning offered by academic support units. Example units include Service Learning, International Study, Ministry and Student Development.

Course. The term course is used to describe a structured and organized learning activity for Marquette University students. This includes, but is not limited to, on and off campus courses, on-line courses, field placements such as internships, student teaching, and practica, service-learning, labs and other research sites, thesis and dissertation supervision.

Learning Objectives. The specific knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes and values (learning) that all students are expected to acquire by the completion of a course. Learning objectives may contribute directly or partially to program learning outcomes.

Learning Outcomes. The specific knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes and values (learning) that all students are expected to acquire by completion of a major, a curricular program and co-curricular activities. Institutional learning outcomes are the specific learning outcomes for all students at Marquette University. Learning outcomes are often stated in the form, "Upon completion of "X" program, students will be able to..."

Performance Indicators. The specific knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors that students will exhibit through writing, stating orally, and behaving that would indicate that the desired learning has been achieved.

Program of Study. A combination of courses and activities organized for the achievement of specific learning outcomes as defined by Marquette University. The term program of study or program covers curricular programming at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

E. Time-lines for Development and Implementation of Learning Assessment

The Provost will establish an institutional assessment system with cycles of unit/ program assessment and reporting. The book *Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education* by Dr. Barbara E. Walvoord, Jossey-Bass, 2004 is recommended by the University Assessment Committee as a primary guide for the development of assessment processes at Marquette University. The construction of the initial MU assessment system will be completed in steps over a two year period, January 2005 to January 2007. The regular implementation of the MU assessment system will begin January 2007

Time-line to Initial Assessment Cycle (AY 2004-2005 through AY 2006-2007)

1. Development of three to five program learning outcomes for each program by September 30, 2005. First draft deadline for undergraduate programs was April 30, 2005 and first draft deadline for masters, doctoral programs and co-curricular units is September 1, 2005.
2. Development of institutional and common core learning outcomes by December 31, 2006.
3. Indicators and measures for at least one of the program learning outcomes (assessment plan) by December 31, 2005 and for core and all program learning outcomes by May 15, 2006.
4. Design of program structures (can be a group or individual) for assessment data collection and analysis and for faculty evaluation of the learning assessment evidence and identification of actions to improve learning by December 31, 2006.
5. The full assessment system will be in place and a complete implementation of the assessment plan begins spring semester 2007. The first annual report of the program assessment cycle with student assessment data is submitted no later than September 30, 2007.

As each subsequent step will be shaped by the outcomes of the previous step, only steps 1, 2, and 3 can be provided in detail at this time. Detailed plans for each step in the development of the MU Assessment System, when complete, will be circulated to Deans, Directors, and Program Assessment Leaders and posted on the assessment web site.

Annual Assessment Cycles (AY 2007-2008 and subsequent years)

1. All academic and co-curricular programs will assess student learning on a continuous basis beginning Fall 2007 and file an annual assessment report on the completed academic year by the following September 30.

2. The annual assessment reports for the previous academic year will be peer reviewed each fall semester using criteria established by this policy and the University Assessment Committee. Feedback from the peer review will be provided to each program or unit to improve the assessment processes.

3. Every institutional, program and unit learning outcome does not need to be assessed each year but the program or unit must establish and follow a rotational schedule that ensures each outcome is assessed on a regular basis.

4. Beginning spring semester 2008, each program or unit will implement at least one action (if any indicated) annually to improve student learning based on the previous year's learning assessment results. The impact of this action on student learning should be assessed at the appropriate time.

4. The University Board of Undergraduate Studies and the University Board of Graduate Studies will review the institutional assessment data and identify actions to improve learning on an annual basis.

5. Summaries of program, unit, and institutional assessment data with opportunities for discussion, feedback and recommendations for actions to improve learning will be provided to the academic deans, co-curricular unit directors, Academic Senate, the University Leadership Council, the Marquette University Student Government and Graduate Student Organization on an annual basis beginning fall semester 2008.

6. Annual Institutional, program and unit assessment reports will be posted on the assessment web site, available to both internal and external stakeholders.

F. Academic Program Review

Academic program review remains an important component of learning assessment and academic planning at MU. The academic program review process is administered by the Vice Provost for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies. The academic program review process was extensively revised over two academic years (2005-2006 and 2006-2007) to more clearly focus on quality indicators and assessment data. Each academic program is reviewed on a six year cycle unless the program holds national accreditation in which case the reviews will occur within the time cycle of the specific accreditor. Specific information on academic program reviews is located on the Office of the Provost web site.

F. Assessment Support and Resources

Faculty, staff, and academic leaders responsible for unit and program assessment processes will receive assistance from the Office of the Provost, the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and the University Assessment Committee. Unit assessment leaders, department chairs, and curriculum

committees will be offered formal workshops and consultation with internal and external peers.

The Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs and Teaching with the assistance of the MU Assessment Steering Team and the University Assessment Committee will oversee development and implementation of assessment plans in all academic units and all co-curricular programs or units. The Vice Provost will oversee assessment of the university common core with the assistance of the Core Curriculum Director and the Core Curriculum and Review Committee. The Vice Provost with the assistance of the Assoc. Vice Provost for Institutional Research and Assessment will collect, maintain and disseminate data of unit, program and institutional learning outcomes, assessment plans, and assessment reports. The Vice Provost, Assoc. Vice Provost, OIRA, and the previously mentioned committees will provide coaching and other assistance as unit and program assessment plans are developed and implemented.

The Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning will assist faculty, graduate teaching assistants, and academic leaders in locating printed and media resources on various aspects of learning assessment. In collaboration with the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs and Teaching the Center will sponsor periodic seminars and workshops on learning outcomes and methods of assessment and arrange for external consultants to work with groups and individuals on assessment plans.

The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment will provide technical support and data analysis services for academic units. This office is responsible for conducting assessment of broad institutional outcomes (e.g. university common core, senior surveys) and for assessment of alumni.)

The University Assessment Steering Team, will assist the Vice Provost in the initial vision for the institutional assessment processes and systems and the time-table for implementation. The team will also develop expertise in different aspects of learning assessment through collaborations with higher education organizations, professional societies, and other universities. It is anticipated that the team will finish its work by January 2007. Members of the Assessment Steering Team are Margaret Bloom, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs and Teaching (Chair); Gregory Konz, S.J., Asst. Dean of Business Administration; Mark McCarthy, Asst. Vice President for Student Development; Michael McKinney, Dean of Arts and Sciences; William Wiener, Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Studies, and Joyce Wolburg, Associate Dean for Graduate Study, College of Communication.

Approved by the University Assessment Committee, March 4, 2005

Approved by the Provost to begin July 1, 2005

Updated May 1, 2006

Revised and approved by the University Assessment Committee, October 2007

Revision approved by the Provost November 5, 2007