

# Marquette University

## PROGRAM- AND INSTITUTIONAL-LEVEL 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 innovation, improvement, and excellence in program- and institutional-level academic and co-curricular outcomes. Such a culture 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 intended student learning and development outcomes in all curricular and co-curricular programs are defined, aligned to educational and developmental experiences, measured, and most importantly, applied to efforts to innovate, improve, and maintain excellence.

### 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). p. 2.). We engage in assessment "not because of... mandates but because it makes sense to consider effectiveness data for future directions (Dary Erwin, *Assessing Student Learning and Development* (1991) p. xvi)."

Assessment of intended 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. We focus primarily on the assessment, innovation, improvement, and excellence of educational and developmental experiences at the major-level and above.

The assessment cycle consists of: Developing and articulating observable and measurable intended student learning or developmental outcomes; mapping the educational experiences designed to progress students toward outcomes, gathering relevant evidence about how well students are meeting the intended outcomes; reflecting on the implications of the evidence collected via assessment, using interpretations to inform decisions about student learning and development experiences; making warranted changes in the course, program, co-curricular or institution-level experiences to enhance learning; and assessing the impact of these changes on student learning and/or development.

### PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT

- The primary purpose for program- and institutional-level assessment is the assurance of excellence, innovation, and improvement of student learning and development; results are intended to inform decisions about program, co-curricular, and institutional level content, delivery, and pedagogy.

- Assessment is a collaborative activity, involving all constituents with a stake in improving student learning. This includes students, faculty, staff, alumni, administrators, and any other stakeholders who can provide unique information useful to the goals of assessment. 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 for excellence, innovation, and improvement. However, we must consider that students themselves are the ones who have the most to gain, or lose, from the decisions made based on assessment evidence. Thus, it may be particularly beneficial to partner with students as we engage in all aspects of our meaningful assessment processes.
- 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 excellence, innovation, and improvement of the experiences that develop students towards intended outcomes.
- 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 experience mapping and/or program theory, indicating where and how students are provided opportunities to learn and demonstrate proficiency.
- Intended outcomes involving attitudes, values and personal transformation are often more difficult to assess than knowledge and performance skills. Assessment of student outcomes in these areas should not be abandoned. As long as opportunities for developing these outcomes can be identified in the students' educational experience, the assessment of such experiences is possible.
- To be manageable and sustainable, assessments that are embedded in existing student work are sometimes preferable to add-on assignments. However, there are times in which such assessments may not answer the high-level questions we would like to answer. 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 the appropriate measures designed to answer the questions we have asked. Assessment practices can always incorporate qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methodologies to provide the evidence appropriate to our questions.
- Assessment by itself is an insufficient condition for learning and improvement; the information produced by assessment must be carefully reflected on, interpreted, and acted upon. It is through a process of educational and developmental innovation and improvement that assessment realizes its potential.
- Because the goal of assessment is program- and institutional-level innovation and improvement, data from program assessments are used to assess student learning and development, often

assessing students as a group. Program assessment data is NEVER used to evaluate faculty or staff.

- Recognizing that assessment not only fosters innovation and improvement but also helps educators meet their responsibilities to various constituencies, assessment plans and results are regularly and appropriately shared with internal and external audiences.
- In an effort to make the assessment process meaningful by linking it to the innovation and improvement of educational and developmental experiences, the assessment process itself is regularly evaluated and refined as insights emerge from the assessment and educational process.

## RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ASSESSMENT

The meaningful assessment of student learning and development is a shared responsibility among Marquette University faculty, academic leaders, administrators, and students.

### Faculty Members (Full and Part Time)

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 the meaningful assessment of program-level learning outcomes. Each course will have clearly stated intended classroom-level student learning outcomes and assessment of student learning linked to these outcomes defined either by the academic department, faculty members, disciplinary accreditors, or some combination of these. While the Office of Assessment may be able to help with classroom-level assessment occasionally (or assist in finding additional resources), the focus of the office is on educational experiences at the program- and institutional-level. Each program will have clearly stated program-level intended student learning outcomes and assessment linked to these outcomes. Active participation in and contributions to assessment planning and assessment processes, including program-level innovation, improvement, and maintenance of excellence will be viewed favorably in annual evaluations.

### Program Administrators

For co-curricular programs and experiences that contribute to student learning, **program administrators** in collaboration with program assessment leaders, program faculty, students, disciplinary accreditors, and other relevant stakeholders, are responsible for articulating intended program-level student learning outcomes, designing experiences that seek to provide students with the opportunity to meet these learning goals, for designing and implementing assessment measures that provide evidence of excellence, innovation, and/or improvement of program-level student learning. Program administrators are also responsible for routinely using assessment data to make appropriate innovations and/or improvements that maximize program-level student learning. Student learning assessment is tied to, but is not the same as, other forms of needs assessment and program evaluation.

### Students

**Undergraduate, graduate, and professional students** are, at a minimum, responsible for participation in both the classroom- and program-level learning outcome assessment processes of their major, program, college, co-curricular activities, and the university. Students are responsible for engaging with various assessment measures 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 Office of the Provost for an institutional requirement. Ideally, students are engaged as partners in the process of program- and institutional-level education and assessment. Students and faculty/staff members can form a powerful team focused on the ultimate goal of a Marquette education: exemplary knowledge, skills, and dispositions. When possible, students are engaged as partners in all aspects of the program-level assessment process.

#### Program Assessment Leaders

**Program Assessment Leaders**, in collaboration with all stakeholders, are responsible for coordination of the assessment processes in their designated programs (common core, major, certificate, post-baccalaureate, graduate, professional, and co-curricular) These processes include: Defining specific and measurable program-level student learning and development outcomes; linking such outcomes explicitly with program-level educational experiences, collecting and summarizing data on student learning and development; disseminating results to faculty and staff for discussion, interpretation, and action (innovation, improvement, and maintaining excellence); and formally providing evidence of meaningful results to the university Office of Assessment. Program Assessment Leaders also engage across the university to provide feedback, guidance, and praise for the assessment efforts of other academic programs

#### Deans, Chairpersons, Directors

**The administrator of each academic and co-curricular unit** (dean, chairperson, program director) is responsible for ensuring that: Both classroom-level and relevant program-level intended student learning outcomes are defined in each course syllabus; statements of measurable intended student learning outcomes are defined for each major, degree program, certificate or co-curricular program; outcomes are mapped to both the assessments and experiences that contribute to achieving the learning outcomes; and that 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 processes of defining intended student learning outcomes, linking the outcomes to educational experiences, developing and implementing appropriate assessment measures, analyzing and interpreting information gathered from such assessment measures, sharing interpretations, and using such interpretations to innovate, improve, and maintain excellence in the core of common studies courses, knowledge areas, and overall intended student 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 committee serves in an advisory capacity to the Office of Assessment, providing feedback and suggestions about assessment work at the University. For more information: [http://marquette.edu/assessment/committee\\_index.shtml](http://marquette.edu/assessment/committee_index.shtml)

**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, and most importantly, the use of assessment information to inform meaningful efforts to innovate, improve, or maintain the excellence of program-

level educational experiences. The director promotes best practices in assessment and delivers regular assessment training for campus stakeholders.

## **ASSESSMENT SUPPORT AND RESOURCES**

**The Office of the Provost** is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the university's assessment processes are effective in encouraging innovation, improvement, and excellence in program-level student learning efforts, 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 and Co-curricular Assessment Team** provide resources, training, and support to departments, administrators, and graduate students who are responsible for co-curricular assessment, including student 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 to the Office of Assessment and relevant stakeholders.

Approved by the University Assessment Committee: 9/21/18

Approved by the Office of the Provost: 10/1/18