

# Eastern Kentucky University 2011 Assessment Plan

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK TO FACULTY AND PROGRAMS WHILE REDUCING OVERALL ASSESSMENT WORKLOAD

- I. **Revise University Assessment and Assessment Reporting to Streamline Process and Gain More Meaningful Feedback.**
  - A) Make annual IE progress report leaner; all required sections are available in TracDat, so that narrative report is not required (*in process for 2010-11 reporting cycle and beyond*).
  - B) Make 2011-15 strategic/action unit plan requirements leaner; all required sections are available in TracDat, narrative report is not required (*in process for 2011-15 plans*).
  - C) Include Teaching and Advising Effectiveness objectives for academic departments and colleges, as well as those units with significant teaching and/or advising responsibilities (*in process for 2011-15 plans*).
  - D) Include Critical/Creative Thinking and Communication (CCT&C) student learning outcomes (SLOs) for all academic programs (*in process for 2011-15 plans*).
  - E) Reduce reporting requirements by enabling units to report progress on University Strategic Plan KPIs in same location and at same time as progress on unit plans (*in process for 2011-15 plans*).
  - F) Administer CAAP-Critical Thinking and CAAP-Writing in alternate years, which capture CCT&C outcomes on both a value-added and actual-vs.-predicted basis.
  - G) Reduce General Education assessment requirements for multi-section courses.
  - H) Review General Education Program to find ways to reduce requirements.
  
- II. **Provide Support for Faculty, Chairs and Departments to Spend Less Time on Assessment and to Make That Time More Meaningful.**
  - A) Encourage every academic department to designate an assessment coordinator who is compensated for his/her time and efforts (which will distribute assessment tasks more fairly).
  - B) Encourage annual department meetings to use assessment data (in concert with faculty expertise) to improve programs. Provide support for departments to do half-day assessment retreats on campus.
  - C) Provide targeted assistance from assessment specialists to academic departments in developing assessment plans and using assessment data.
    - 1) Help departments develop reasonable action plans for data collection related to their objectives. Consider including a larger number of SLOs for assessment and measure each of them less frequently (every 2 or 3 years) to better cover the breadth of learning in an academic program.
    - 2) Assist academic departments in collecting and interpreting meaningful CCT&C data that will be part of their 2011-15 plans (i.e., working with departments to refine, assess, and use data from senior-level-course work products).
    - 3) Help departments align their planning objectives and measures with the 2011-15 University Strategic Plan strategic directions and KPIs.
    - 4) Help reduce duplication in assessment by helping departments align university assessment with assessment done for accrediting bodies.
  - D) Create Assessment Users Group (meeting with assessment coordinators) to share best practices and build 'community of practice' within EKU to more fully engage faculty and departments.

### **III. Add Culminating Experience to Integrate Students' Learning and Facilitate Assessment**

- A) Encourage undergraduate programs to include capstone course, senior seminar, or other similar culminating experience to reduce their assessment tasks by assessing many programmatic outcomes in one course (e.g., capstone assessment workshops).
- B) Explore the feasibility of an integrative, interdisciplinary capstone course that will tie together skills/knowledge gained in the major with skills/knowledge gained in general education courses, particularly for those programs without a capstone or other integrated experience. This integrative course would reduce assessment by replacing the measurement of as many SLOs in general education and the major as possible.

## PHILOSOPHY OF ASSESSMENT AT EASTERN

Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving the effectiveness of Eastern Kentucky University in achieving its mission and goals. An effective assessment program should lead to quality improvement and achieving institutional, unit, program, and course goals and objectives. Assessment serves as the “Check” step in the “Plan-Do-Check-Act” cycle of continuous quality improvement, and provides the evidence needed to close the loop and use the results of assessment to inform improvements. A user-friendly and flexible documentation and reporting process is necessary for assessment to be accepted and its results used for improvement. This plan provides a framework for gathering and using the information needed in a streamlined and meaningful fashion.

### PLANNING FOR ASSESSMENT

The University’s Strategic Plan establishes the broad framework for planning at all levels of the institution. ECU organizes for planning and assessment through the Strategic Planning Council (SPC), the Financial Planning Council (FPC), the University Assessment Committee (UAC), Planning Groups (representatives of colleges or divisions, such as deans or vice presidents, who report directly to the President and Provost), and Reporting Units (departments or units within each planning group).

The *University Assessment Committee* (UAC) seeks to streamline assessment at ECU, make assessment user-friendly and meaningful, and assess Eastern’s progress in fulfilling its goals and mission.

*Planning groups* (colleges/divisions) have the following responsibilities:

1. prepare and submit an annual IE Progress Report,
2. collect and analyze assessment data,
3. update TracDat (add assessment results, how results are used for improvement, and make modifications to plan),
4. provide feedback to reporting units on their progress and plans from prior semester,
5. prepare action plans for the next strategic planning cycle.

*Reporting units* (departments/offices) have the following responsibilities:

1. prepare and submit an annual IE Progress Report,
2. collect and analyze assessment data for the academic year,
3. update TracDat (add assessment results, how results are used for improvement, and make modifications to plan),
4. prepare action plans for the next strategic planning cycle.

The University will continue to gather assessment information under the umbrella of the strategic planning process, thereby reducing duplicate assessment by aligning planning objectives and measures with the 2011-15 University Strategic Plan strategic directions and KPIs. This process incorporates the setting of meaningful goals and objectives; the development and implementation of multiple direct and indirect measures to ensure that objectives are being met; the use of the results of those measures to inform improvements in academic programs and educational support services; and the assurance that the University is accomplishing its mission.

### **Reducing Assessment Workload by Tying into the Strategic Planning Process for Key Information**

The 2011-15 unit plan requirements are now leaner, with all required sections available in TracDat so that narrative reports will no longer be required. We seek to reduce duplicate assessment wherever possible by gathering outcomes for department planning objectives and measures through the 2011-15 University Strategic

Plan strategic directions and KPIs. Assessment workload can be reduced by helping departments develop reasonable action plans for data collection related to their objectives. Teaching Effectiveness and Advising Effectiveness objectives will be included in plans and progress reports for academic departments and colleges, as well as those units with significant teaching and/or advising responsibilities.

We recommend measuring a larger number of student learning outcomes (SLOs) for assessment less frequently (every 2 or 3 years) to better cover the breadth of learning in an academic program. We encourage undergraduate programs to include a capstone course, senior seminar, or other similar culminating experience to reduce their assessment tasks by assessing many programmatic outcomes in one course.

## ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Planning and assessment are conducted at the university level, the college/division level, and the department/unit level, with a strong interconnection among the three levels. Every unit clearly identifies outcomes that are measurable, assesses those outcomes for efficacy, and uses the results of those assessments to improve its programs and support services.

Assessment in the academic programs involves each of the following steps:

- 1) Each academic program develops *end-of-program learning outcomes* that are linked to the statement of mission and purposes, developed by faculty, measurable, actionable, built on existing course-specific outcomes, and reflect general education program goals where appropriate.
- 2) Each program employs *direct measures of student academic achievement* that possess a one-to-one relationship to each program learning outcome, were developed and used by faculty and other appropriate persons, relate to one or more of cognitive, behavioral and affective learning, and include multiple rater/evaluators where possible.
- 3) Each program employs *multiple measures of student academic achievement* where both direct and indirect measures are used in concert to “triangulate” and corroborate the findings, each measure can be related back to program learning outcomes and be used to improve teaching and learning, multiple raters are used where possible, and new measures are introduced periodically to determine efficacy and to keep the assessment program relevant and up-to-date.
- 4) Each program *analyzes the results* of its assessment measures, and the analysis must be faculty-driven and faculty-owned, relate results back to specific program learning outcomes, be thoroughly and thoughtfully documented, be evaluative as well as descriptive, include criteria for success, and be able to result in corrective actions.
- 5) *Feedback from the assessment process* is used to improve the program and the teaching and learning processes within the program. This feedback should be developed by faculty and department leadership, relate back to specific program learning outcomes, relate both to “what we teach” (curriculum) and “how we teach” (pedagogy), map feedback on outcomes back to specific courses, and reflect actions taken based on feedback in program planning and budgeting processes.

Responsibility for the assessment of program-specific student learning outcomes lies with the individual academic department. We encourage every academic department to designate an assessment coordinator who is compensated for his/her efforts. Some of a program’s SLOs are expected to align with the CCT&C and general education objectives, while others will be unique to the program (CCT&C SLOs for all academic programs will be included in 2011-15 plans). We seek to reduce the assessment workload by helping academic departments develop reasonable action plans for data collection related to their objectives and, as mentioned above, measuring a larger number of student learning outcomes (SLOs) less frequently to better cover the breadth of learning in an academic program.

Assessing student learning begins with the articulation of what it is that students should know, think, feel or be able to do by the end of their program of study. Stating these items in terms of student learning objectives is the first step in the assessment process. Faculty then identify what program experiences (courses, seminars, research, etc.) help students achieve the desired objectives, identify the methods with which to assess the student learning objectives, the timeline for data collection, the parties responsible for the data collection, analysis, and reporting, and the anticipated use of the analysis.

### **Identifying Expected Outcomes**

Academic departments and administrative/educational support units must clearly define expected outcomes that can be evaluated to determine efficacy and areas in need of improvement.

#### **Academic Programs and Departments**

Each academic program must identify at least five student learning outcomes that are measurable and actionable, and that specify the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes students are expected to achieve, as well as the faculty's experience in and knowledge of the discipline. Two of these SLOs must relate to (1) critical and creative thinking, and (2) communication. Teaching Effectiveness and Advising Effectiveness objectives will be included for each academic department and college. Ideally, the program faculty will articulate all of the student learning outcomes expected of students completing the program. These educational outcomes are reviewed annually by the faculty of each academic program.

#### **General Education**

The goal of the General Education Program at ECU is to promote intellectual curiosity and independence, as well as good citizenship in a diverse, democratic society, and global community. All degree-seeking students are required to complete 48 hours of approved general education courses. The currently-approved General Education Program has implemented a more fully-integrated assessment process to determine the efficacy of the program. General education courses are assessed each semester. General education assessment requirements for multi-section courses will be reduced through a sampling process. The number of General Education hours and courses will be evaluated.

#### **Administrative and Educational Support Services**

ECU's administrative and educational support services are assessed through the strategic planning process. Each dean or vice president is responsible for the planning among those areas that are direct reports (Planning Group). The persons heading those areas (associate vice presidents, chairs, and directors) are in turn responsible for the planning process in the units that report to them (Reporting Unit). Each administrative and educational support unit identifies and assesses at least three planning objectives and may include objectives related to student learning, teaching effectiveness, and/or advising effectiveness, depending on the student focus of its mission.

### **Assessment of Outcomes**

#### **Academic Programs and Departments**

Academic programs are assessed through annual program assessment. Faculty in each department are to annually review ECU's degree programs and the extent to which students are achieving the intended outcomes for each program. Each department is responsible for selecting appropriate assessment tools that address what they expect students to learn. The results of these assessments are reported via the Annual Institutional Effectiveness Progress Report, and they are used to make improvements in academic programs.

Undergraduate programs are encouraged to include a capstone course, senior seminar, or other similar culminating experience, in which many programmatic outcomes can be assessed in one course (e.g., capstone

assessment workshops). A group designated by the Provost will determine which programs have a culminating experience, and for those that do not, will explore the possibility of an integrative, interdisciplinary capstone course that will tie together skills/knowledge gained in the major with skills/knowledge gained in general education courses. This integrative course would reduce assessment by replacing the measurement of as many SLOs in general education and the major as possible.

### **General Education Assessment**

General education courses are offered by different departments across the University, which requires assessment to be a more intricate process for the University General Education Committee. In summer 2005 faculty members from departments offering general education courses attended a five-day workshop to develop common scoring rubrics for communications, writing, mathematics, wellness, arts and humanities, natural sciences, and social and behavioral sciences. The rubrics were developed using the goals for each content area in the General Education Program. Since critical thinking is common to all blocks of the program, ECU assesses critical thinking in all general education courses as well. The critical thinking rubric was developed by all faculty workshop participants. Both the critical thinking rubric and the subject-area rubrics were applied to the same student work. After pilot-testing the rubrics in 2005-2006, faculty members revised some of the language in the rubrics, and combined the relevant criteria from the critical-thinking rubric with the GE Block-specific rubrics. Thus, only one rubric is needed to assess each course. In the summer 2008, three rubrics were further revised based on faculty feedback. Because these rubrics were being revised anyway, the group decided to also include in the rubrics the language of the Intellectual Standards from the Foundation for Critical Thinking framework (used widely by the University for the QEP). The language from this framework of critical thinking will be incorporated into all of the rubrics as it becomes necessary to revise them in the future.

All courses, as well as the General Education Program as a whole, are assessed using direct measures via course-embedded assessment. The faculty members teaching different sections of the same general education course develop a common assessment assignment that is administered to students in all sections of the course. This includes all sections, no matter how (including delivery modality), where, or by whom they are taught. In order to reduce the burden of evaluating multiple sections, procedures were revised in fall 2010. Departments have the option of selecting data/assignments from a subset of the sections offered, via a stratified random sampling procedure to include data from full- and part-time instructors, on-line and on-campus courses, and Richmond and extended campus courses. Any assignment/exercise may be used to assess student learning in a course, as long as it is produced near the end of the term, and provides direct measures of student learning. Departments decide how the scoring is conducted, but for subjective scoring, e.g., essay exams, papers, reliability is assured with multiple scorers. Departments designate a faculty member as course coordinator, who organizes the scoring and prepare reports for the General Education Committee, for the course as a whole. Departments then use the course-level data to make course improvements. Finally, the Coordinator of Assessment for General Education aggregates the data so that it can be assessed at the program level.

Programmatic assessment of the General Education Program is also done with the Critical Thinking Assessment Test (CAT) and senior capstone projects. The CAT test is administered to freshman- and senior-level students, and will provide information about the extent to which students are meeting the goals of general education before they graduate. The capstone projects are discipline-specific and will inform individual departments about the extent to which their senior-level students are meeting departmental goals. These data will also be used to determine the extent to which students are meeting critical thinking and communication goals of the University (GE and QEP).

### **QEP Assessment – Critical/Creative Thinking and Communication**

The purpose of the QEP Assessment Plan is to ascertain the effectiveness of ECU's efforts to develop informed, critical and creative thinkers who communicate effectively on multiple levels. To capture comprehensive evidence of student learning, summative and formative assessment processes are being implemented, using

direct and indirect assessment methods. Formative assessment is conducted during a program or course and provides immediate information for improving student learning. Summative assessment is used to check the level of student learning at the end of the program. Direct methods ask students to demonstrate their learning through tools such as objective tests, essays and evaluations of cooperative supervisor/employers. Indirect methods ask them to reflect on their learning through tools such as surveys and interviews.

Critical/Creative Thinking and Communication SLOs will be included for all academic programs in the 2011-15 plans. We will assist academic departments in collecting and interpreting meaningful CCT&C data that will be part of their 2011-15 plans. We will work with departments to refine, assess, and use data from senior-level-course work products.

### ***QEP Formative Assessment***

Formative assessment will take place in each QEP funded project, as well as for each degree program within the University. Each of the QEP funded projects has articulated learning outcomes that are being assessed, evaluated, and programmatic changes are being made depending upon the results. Each of the 40 academic departments is in the process of identifying student learning outcomes (SLOs) and assessment measures that are related to the ECU QEP. As of August 2010, 92% of all academic departments have at least one SLO articulated in the TracDat data management system.

### ***QEP Summative Assessment***

Summative assessment began in 2007 with the collection of data on Freshmen, Transfer Students, and Seniors.

Direct measures include:

- CAT (Critical Assessment Test) developed by Tennessee Tech University.
  - The test targets the following skills; cognitive, evaluation, synthesis, analysis, application, and comprehension.
  - Freshmen and Senior CAT results will be compared.
  - The University-developed Critical and Creative Thinking Rubric will be applied to the CAT responses.
- CAAP (Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency) developed by ACT.
  - Measures students' achievement of critical thinking and writing skills
  - Freshman and Senior results will be compared to examine gains, as will actual results versus those predicted by ACT score at time of entry.
  - Administer CAAP-Critical Thinking and CAAP-Writing in alternate years, which capture CCT&C outcomes on both a value-added and actual-vs.-predicted basis.

Indirect measures include:

- Student responses to ten questions related to the QEP theme on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).
- The ECU Co-op Employer Survey will be distributed to employers who have hired employed ECU senior-level students to assess the critical and creative thinking and communication skills.

### ***QEP Assessment Tools***

- CAT (Critical Thinking Assessment Test)
- CAAP (Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency) Critical Thinking and Writing Exams
- NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement)
- University's Critical and Creative Thinking Rubric
- University's Written Communication Rubric
- ECU Co-op Employer Survey
- Assessment Plans for each individual QEP funded projects

### **Administrative and Educational Support Units**

Each administrative or educational support unit assesses at least three planning objectives and from zero to three educational objectives, depending on the student focus of the unit. The Annual Institutional Effectiveness Progress Report provides the structure for the documentation of an annual review of progress in accomplishing goals and objectives for the past year. The 2011-15 unit plan requirements are now leaner, with all required sections available in TracDat so that narrative reports will no longer be required.

### **Using Assessment Results for Improvement: Closing the Loop**

EKU is committed to providing ongoing evidence of improvement in educational programs and administrative/educational support services. The meaningful use of data will be increased by encouraging annual department meetings to use assessment data (in concert with faculty expertise) to improve programs. Program faculty and departmental staff will use information gathered from the planning and assessment process to identify the specific strengths and weaknesses of their programs and to make necessary adjustments to the curriculum, faculty development, resource commitments, and other factors that can strengthen their academic programs. Administrative/educational support service providers use the information to improve student services and support to their key constituents and clients in the University community.

### **ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES**

Every planning group and reporting unit conducts assessment for planning objectives and/or student learning outcomes. Measures are then identified for each objective (outcome) to allow for the analysis of results. At the department level, results are analyzed by the faculty and staff in each department. At the university level, the University Assessment Committee analyzes the results.

#### **Documentation**

Each unit enters its objectives, measures, criteria for success, results, and use of results for improvement into ECU's TracDat system, from which the data are easily retrievable via a battery of standard and custom reports. Units must also link each of their objectives to their college's or division's relevant strategic directions, as well as to the University's strategic directions. For each objective, there is a section in the TracDat system that asks how the results were used to make improvements, and the resulting ECU assessment impact reports summarize the use of results for each objective.

#### **IE Progress Report**

The performance of each unit is reviewed annually in the Annual IE Progress Report. The annual IE progress report is now leaner with all required sections available in TracDat, so that a narrative report is not required. The components of the report include for each objective a summary of results, criteria for success, whether the criteria were achieved, and how the unit used the assessment results for that objective to improve results for next year (if improvements are needed).

#### **Feedback**

To ensure continuous improvement, feedback occurs at various levels and stages of the planning and assessment process. Planning group heads provide feedback to their reporting units upon receipt of their Annual IE Progress Reports. The UAC assesses achievement of university-level strategic directions and provides a report to the SPC, which uses that report to inform its own progress report to the President and Board of Regents.

## APPENDIX: SACS Regional Accreditation Requirements Related to Assessment

### **From SACS Principles of Accreditation:**

“The (accreditation) process provides an assessment of an institution’s effectiveness in the fulfillment of its mission, its compliance with the requirements of its accrediting association, and its continuing efforts to enhance the quality of student learning and its programs and services.”

“Accreditation requires institutional commitment to the concept of quality enhancement through continuous assessment and improvement.”

### **Core Requirement 2.5 (Institutional Effectiveness):**

*The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes; (2) result in continuing improvement in institutional quality; and (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission.*

### **Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1 (Institutional Effectiveness):**

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

*3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes*

*3.3.1.2 administrative support services*

*3.3.1.3 educational support services*

*3.3.1.4 research within its educational mission, if appropriate*

*3.3.1.5 community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate*

### **Federal Requirement 4.1 (Student Achievement):**

*The institution evaluates success with respect to student achievement including, as appropriate, consideration of course completion, state licensing examinations, and job placement rates.*

### **Core Requirement 2.12 (Quality Enhancement Plan):**

*The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that includes an institutional process for identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment and focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution.*

### **Comprehensive Standard 3.3.2 (Quality Enhancement Plan):**

*The institution has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan that (1) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP; (2) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP; and (3) identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement.*

### **Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1 (College-level Competencies):**

*The institution identifies college-level general education competencies and the extent to which graduates have attained them.*