Southwestern Michigan College

Learning Assessment Manual 2022-2023

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Introduction

What is Learning Assessment

Learning assessment is a fundamental academic quality improvement process required of higher education in both the two-year and four-year setting. It is not merely a mandate from accreditors; rather, it is an integral part of the educational process. Learning assessment (simply termed *assessment* as we move forward in this document) requires substantiation in the form of evidence that authenticates student learning. Faculty spend a great deal of time preparing course materials and instructing their students. Educators cannot simply assume, however, that learning is taking place as they teach. Learning must be validated. The primary questions posed in assessment are straightforward: "Are the students learning? How do we know?"

At all colleges and universities, assessment follows established models of best practice. While SMC assessment processes, as described below, come from a multitude of best practices, the two primary models we follow come from the American Association of Colleges and Universities and Quality Matters™ .

Why We Assess

As a public institution Southwestern Michigan College (SMC) has a responsibility to demonstrate to students, our communities, and the state that its educational programs prepare learners to work in their chosen careers and/or to pursue further education. In order to demonstrate the value of SMC's educational programs, faculty, and often staff, must regularly assess the extent to which students are learning the knowledge and skills that will help them to be active, productive citizens. This demonstration of learning pertains to the students' individual courses, the programs they are enrolled in, and their overall disposition regarding essential values as shaped by their experience at the institution.

One way in which SMC can demonstrate learning is by adhering to the quality requirements of its accrediting body. SMC is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), which as with all regional accreditations has specific Criteria for Accreditation (see appendix for the complete list). Primary focus for teaching and learning, especially as they relate to assessment, come in Criterion 3 and in Criterion 4.

For instance, HLC states in Core Component 3.B that an institution "offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments" SMC demonstrates this holistic student growth through the College's Institutional Learning Competencies (ILCs). (More discussion to follow.)

Further, Core Component 4.B requires that an "institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students". This criteria is primarily demonstrated through SMC's program student learning outcomes (PLOs) -

including those found in co curricular programming, and course student learning outcomes (CLOs) to detail that:

"1) *The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings. 2) The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning. 3) The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members." (HLC Criterion 4.B)*

Beyond meeting accreditors' expectations, our assessment practices should fit the strategic goals for the College. As discussed later, assessment data should inform the college's budgeting and planning processes, which start with meeting the mission of Southwestern Michigan College: "to serve our community by providing affordable, local access to high-quality postsecondary career preparation and college education—including the total college-life experience*."* Note that our mission clearly establishes us as something more than a trade school with aspirations to provide the same kind of overall collegiate experience for our students as provided by the majority of 4-year institutions.

The 2020-2023 Strategic Plan also identifies clear strategies to help SMC fulfill its mission. Several of these goals (including Engaged Students, Exceptional Faculty and Staff, Established Assessment Practices, and Accountability) are clearly tied to the quality of the educational programs offered by SMC. As such, assessment results provide data points that help SMC determine the extent to which its strategic goals are being met. Assessing student learning outcomes is necessary to improve educational programs and serves as a key input to the educational planning process. It also assures that SMC knows that our students' education will open doors wherever they choose to go.

Of course, assessment is only useful if it helps faculty determine how well their students are learning, what can be done to improve their learning, and ascertaining these things in a way that is not overly complex and/or burdensome. The best assessment processes are ones which can easily be incorporated into courses and programs and add value to discussions of how to improve learning. At SMC, faculty are encouraged to use already-existing assignments, exercises, presentations and the like to assess student learning. However, if current assignments are not well-aligned with program learning outcomes or course learning outcomes, then this is an opportunity to create new, high quality assignments that integrate with existing course material.

Learning assessment is not a faculty evaluation tool. When assessment results fall short of performance goals, there isn't any one inference that can be drawn. Findings may be due to inadequate resources, equipment, the setting, or a myriad of other things. If students consistently fail to attain a learning outcome in a particular program, that only indicates that changes are needed. There is much more to be examined. Perhaps additional courses should be added to the program that stress this particular learning outcome, or one or more courses should be revised to better teach the knowledge and/or skills associated with the outcome. It also could confirm the need for resources and thus support a budgetary request. Without

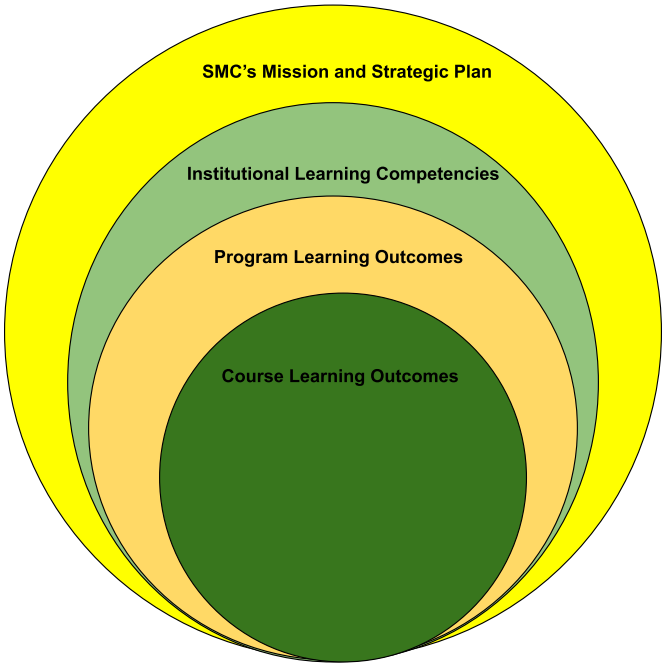
assessment data, however, program changes would be made blindly and these changes may not target any areas in which improvements are most needed.

In addition, assessment is consistent and ongoing. It is not episodic. There are points in time when assessment deadlines are present, such as when course learning outcomes come due at the end of each term, or program learning outcome review that happens annually. However, assessment is also multi-layered with each component supporting the next in a series of ongoing activities. Program Reviews, for example, are another part of the College's overall assessment strategy. They are more comprehensive and done less frequently (perhaps only every 3-5 years). They are not, however, a stand alone exercise. The collective CLO and PLO reviews that are being done routinely inform the program review and provide longitudinal information to identify, promote, and substantiate college-level needs for program viability.

Lastly, assessment has its own unique language. In order to engage in a common language across the campus, a glossary of assessment terms has been included in the Appendix.

Overall Framework for Learning Assessment at Southwestern MIchigan College

Models of learning assessment are scaffolded to address every level of learning as well as the College's goals and mission. Several measures come together to form the structure of SMC's learning assessment process and protocols. The figure to the right illustrates how the levels of assessment scaffold down from the College's Mission and Strategic Plan.



Institutional Learning Competencies

SMC's *Institutional Learning Competencies (ILCs)* are the overarching value-oriented outcomes that the College desires all of its learners to practice and embody from entry to graduation at SMC. The ILCs feed the College's mission and strategic planning. They evolved from a Statement of Institutional Values the College had had since 2011. The full definitions of the ILCs can be found in the Appendix, but, in short, they are the following:

- Communication
- Critical thinking
- Engagement

- Ethical responsibility
- Global awareness

Attaining these outcomes helps our students to holistically develop in their personal and professional lives, and to contribute meaningfully throughout their lives in their communities. Because we want our students to be aware that they are growing in these holistic values during their academic journey, and cognizant of their importance, an ILC-associated statement ultimately should be in every syllabus:
I.E.:

> ***Institutional Learning Competencies (ILC)***
> *For this course, students are expected to demonstrate the skills associated with the Institutional Learning Competency noted below and as articulated in the SMC Catalog.*
>
> - *{Communication}*
> - *{Critical thinking}*
> - *{Global awareness}*
> - *{Engagement}*
> - *{Ethical responsibility}*
>
> *ILC Assessment is used to assure the holistic growth of our learners and to improve instructional planning, design, and quality throughout the College. Because ILCs are personal values that are always changing, they are not directly taught in this course. They are simply witnessed through the content to assure you have a strong foundation and are growing in their understanding. SMC will assess them through course assignments, but via a separate ILC rubric that has no impact on your grade.*

Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are present within two levels of learning at the College. At the program level, *Program (student) Learning Outcomes (PLOs)* articulate what program-specific competencies students should demonstrate upon graduating in their area of study. A program's PLOs align with each ILC to ensure every student possesses competency in both upon completion at SMC.

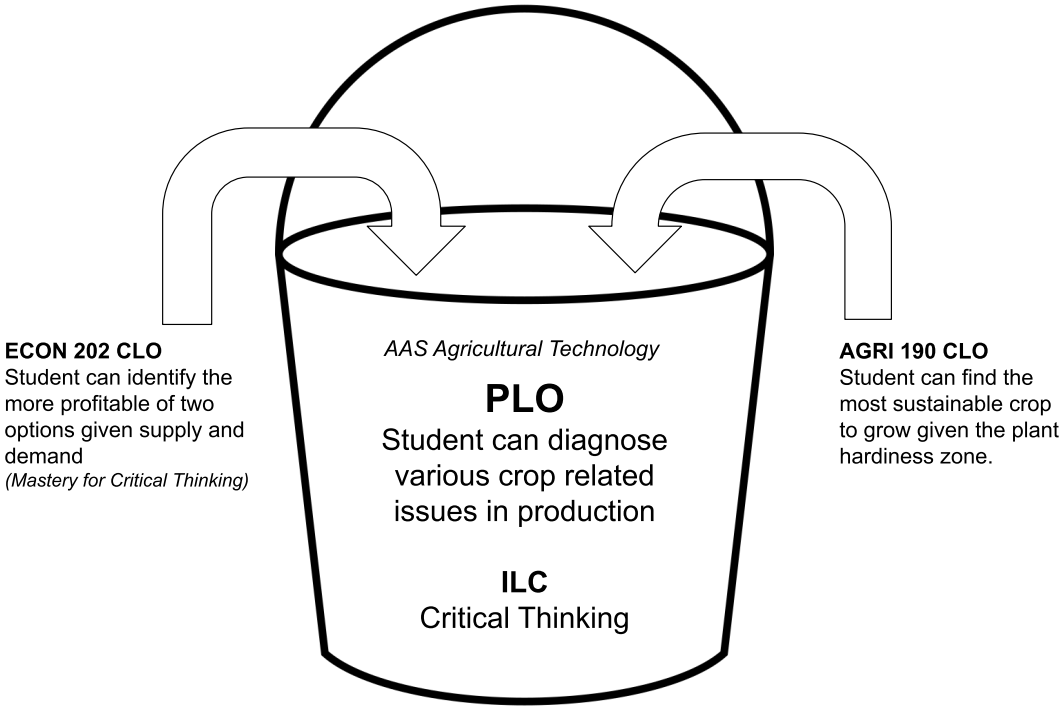
At the course level, *Course (student) Learning Outcomes (CLOs)* outline what students will know and be able to do at the end of a course. CLOs are also mapped to PLOs to assure that the larger purpose of a department's goals are collectively met.

The table below illustrates the manifestation of the *Global Awareness and Appreciation* ILC within Institutional, Program, and Course level outcomes:

ILC Global Awareness and Appreciation	
Institutional Level	The knowledge of the interdependence of local, global, international, and intercultural people, societies, issues, trends, and systems, and an ability to apply this cultural and global awareness to human interaction and expression.
Program Level	A.A. Degree, Communications Program Learning Outcome: Graduating students will evaluate local, national, and/or global issues from a communications perspective in order to influence public discourse and embrace difference
Course Level	Non-Western Civilization, HUMA 210, Course Learning Outcome: Compare and contrast leading characteristics of non-western civilization and western civilization.

An example of how ILCs, PLOs, and CLOs all work together is helpful. The AAS in Agricultural Technology program may tie the ILC of *Critical Thinking* to a PLO stating that the “student can diagnose various crop related issues in production". The required ECON 202 course may have a related CLO about supply and demand and the AGRI 190 course may have one about identifying crops suited for the region. These two courses work together to build the students' competency in the PLO, and their value of the ILC, through the CLOs.

Once a semester, the faculty teaching ECON 202 and AGRI 190 will report how the students did on each CLO. The individual CLO reports are then considered together annually as to how the students are meeting the applicable PLO and related ILC.



Externally Accredited Programs

Within the College several programs are separately accredited by other external agencies (not just the HLC). While these programs additionally report to other organizations, all programs are still responsible to ensure that there is alignment between the ILC, PLO, and CLO standards as well as those that must be met for the individualized accreditor. At SMC, these programs include areas such as Nursing (Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing, Inc), Health Information Technology (Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management), and Automotive (National Institute for Automotive Excellence).

Data-Informed Decision Making

One of the most important aspects of the learning assessment process is the use of assessment results to inform decision making. Effective assessment practices promote activities and an environment that makes good use of data gained through these efforts. Assessment supports the need for change, enhances student success, and increases the organization's effectiveness at the college, program, and/or course level. Assessment holds little value if there is no reflection upon completion of the results. The information provides considerable insight into how academic programs can better achieve their goals and outcomes. It is a reflective and iterative process that provides a basis for maintaining, implementing, and/or removing programs, initiatives, and other activities. Assessment processes are most effective when they are useful, reasonably accurate, planned, systemic, and sustained. At the end of an assessment cycle, programs and departments look to answer the question, “What does the evidence tell us?” With those answers, the College can support decisions ranging from recommended textbook changes to curricular changes (as brought to the Curriculum &

Instruction Committee) to academic support requests (such as lab assistance) to requests for additional faculty as appropriate.

Specific Example of Data-Informed Decision Making

A review of student feedback for CONS 135 (Electrical and Mechanical Systems), along with CLO assessment data, recently showed a steady decline in student interest and understanding of how the course fit within the Construction Trades program. Analysis of the data, conversations with students and advisory committee members revealed two primary issues.

First, electrical, plumbing, and HVAC systems in residential buildings (the focus of the course learning outcomes) are now fully accomplished by subcontractors. They could each be academic programs in themselves, of which are beyond the College scope, and are no longer the realm of those doing construction work (as it may have been when the course was initially designed).

Second, the 4-contact hour course was also not sufficient to provide competency in any of the areas. Results from the students' assignments consistently showed a lack of the in-depth knowledge necessary to perform those related activities in the workplace, and, if anything, revealed a safety risk to any student who thought they could perform the activities.

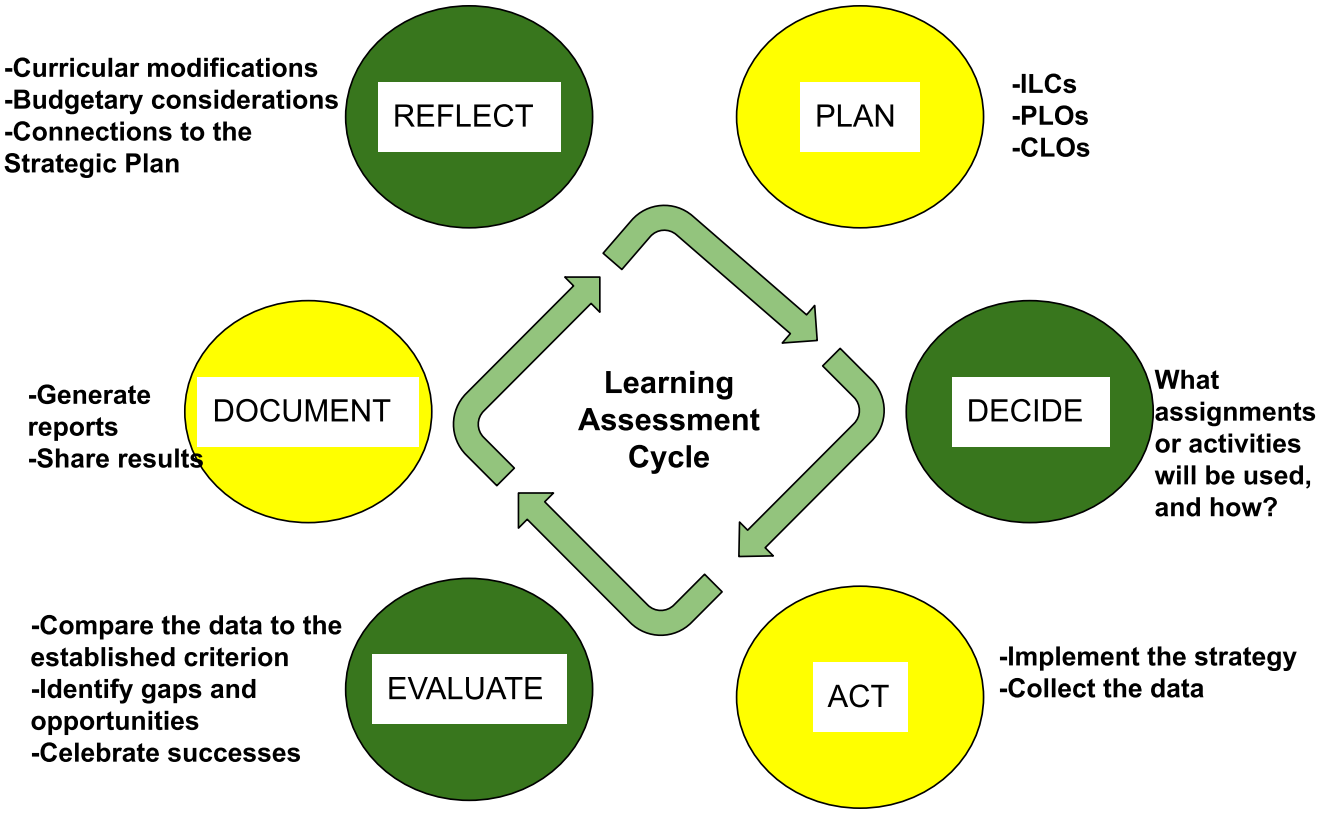
Armed with this evidence the department brought a recommendation to the dean, the provost, and finally to the Curriculum and Instruction Committee. They advocated for retiring the course, and teaching the theoretical (big picture) knowledge of electrical, plumbing, and HVAC systems as part of another course. With clear substantiation from the evidence collected through learning assessment, the recommendation passed.

The following semesters have indicated greater satisfaction and congruency of the curriculum for students. Without a need for certain areas of the lab that were previously required for the hands-on electrical, plumbing, and HVAC training, the instructor repurposed and improved upon the layout of the lab. This included line of sight improvements that enhanced student safety. Dollars for the material components of the previous electrical training were then put to use in updating the lab to fully cordless tools– a budgetary decision made possible through the cycle of assessment events.

Would like to acquire more examples here…

SMC's Learning Assessment Process

Because learning assessment is an ongoing activity, it is difficult to articulate a starting and stopping point. Instead, it is a continuous cycle that may involve entering into different aspects of the work at different times and various on and off ramps for individuals participating. The following figure illustrates the continuous, cyclic nature of learning assessment:



In an effort to separate the process into something more linear, a starting point is the development of an assessment plan that accomplishes the work. For faculty and staff, this means identifying PLOs, CLOs (where applicable), and designated assignments/activities that will be measured. Once that plan is in motion, faculty and co-curricular staff may jump right into the implementation (*Act*) and evaluation stages in the next cycle. Administrators may enter the process once documents and reports are generated, participating as necessary in the short term by communicating findings and taking forward items for strategic and budgetary planning. How each individual participates in learning assessment will look a little different depending on their role at the College, what they may teach (i.e. general education courses versus major courses, introductory content versus mastery content), and/or the department needs that begin to emerge. Nonetheless, the unique participation of individuals is what keeps the cycle moving in a deliberate and constant flow of curricular planning all the way through to reflection. The cycle constantly churns to improve resources, curriculum, and spaces/equipment in order to move the needle on improved student learning. Key dates in the timeline are always at semesters' end, when another group of students have completed courses so that faculty and academic administrators can evaluate the semester data.

At the end of Spring semesters, generally seen as the end of an academic year, the college more broadly shares assessment data and discusses observations through the annual outcomes assessment day meetings, departmental meetings, and via the Provost with Cabinet.. Depending on the costs involved, budget requests aligned with assessment findings can occur at any time, although capital requests (non-personnel requests over $5000) need to be made in January/February of any year so that they can be brought to the college's Spring budget hearings.

Learning Assessment Plan and Reporting Framework

SMC's annual learning assessment plan requires that all programs, through the collective efforts of their faculty/staff (facilitated by the director, lead faculty, or chair as applicable, championed by the dean, and supported by the Provost to the Cabinet and Board) do the following:

- Create five Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs);
- Align each PLO to one of the Institutional Learning Competencies (ILCs);
- Design appropriate Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs);
- Align the CLOs of the courses in the major to the PLOs;
- Assure the CLOs of the required general education courses contribute to the PLOs;
- Assure that the combination of general education and major courses contribute to each PLO (ideally) a minimum of three times;
- Designate assessment activities within each course (area) that measure student learning of the CLOs and/or mastery-level outcomes;
- Document findings each term;
- Document findings annually for PLOs and ILCs;
- Develop plans for improved student learning based on results (curricular, strategic, budgetary etc.);
- Maintain trend data to see long term losses and gains;
- Share and celebrate successes and best practices.

Obviously many of these, especially listed first, occur once and then as needed based upon subsequent assessment results.

Mapping

An essential core component of good assessment practice is the mapping of ILCs, PLOs, and CLOs across the curriculum. Always frame our assessment work around two basic questions: Are students learning? How do we know? Our answers to those two questions should be evident upon a student's graduation. Curriculum maps for every SMC program are necessary to show where the graduate picked up the ILCs, applicable PLOs, and applicable CLOs. Each one of those must be present (identified on the map to graduate).

In general, curriculum maps indicate where each learning outcome (PLO or CLO) is addressed throughout a program of study. They also show whether the learning outcome is *introduced (I), reinforced (R), or mastered (M)*. Learning outcome assessment focuses on courses in which the

learning outcome is mastered. These are the locations where the gathering of results, from specifically designed activities, allows us to establish and then see patterns in student growth.

Mapping Institutional Learning Competencies for Assessment

SMC utilizes a model of assessment in which our Institutional Learning Competencies are inherent in our Program Learning Outcomes. By aligning one PLO with one ILC, and ensuring that at least one course in the program contributes to the ILC at the Mastery level, we certify that our students have mastered the values associated with each ILC, as verified by a signature assignment identified in every Mastery level course.

At SMC, every program has a PLO map and an ILC map. Since Institutional Learning Competencies cross all programs, ILC maps are provided in the Appendix. For the sake of an explicit example, let's compare how an ILC map looks in a Business AA program to how the PLO map looks for the same program.

TABLE 1 - ILC Map

In this program, the ILC of *Communication* is assessed in ENGL 103 (the M level course for the ILC). The ILC of *Communication* is also linked to the PLO, "*Develop solutions to business problems, using appropriate language and tools".*

Course	*ILC* ***Communication***	*ILC* ***Critical Thinking***	*ILC* ***Engagement***	*ILC* ***Ethical Responsibility***	*ILC* ***Global Awareness***
ENGL 103	***M***				
HUMA 210					***M***
BUSI 207				***M***	
BUSI 200			***M***		
ECON 202		***M***			
	Related PLO *Develop solutions to business problems, using appropriate language and tools.*	*Related PLO* *Explain effective business decisions and solutions.*	*Related PLO* *Demonstrate professional demeanor.*	*Related PLO* *Apply ethical frameworks to business situations.*	*Related PLO* *Discuss the effects of culture and ethics in the current global and domestic business environment.*

A PLO map (Table 2), however, may look a little different as the courses and their individual CLOs contribute to the PLO in different ways. Each PLO should ideally have at least three points of assessment, although that may not always be possible (or needed). In this example, BUSI 200 is the mastery (M) course for the first PLO based upon CLO 2 and 5 within the course. It is one location where assessment takes place for the PLO. CLO 1 in BUSI 207, is another.

TABLE 2 - PLO Map for *Master* level CLOs

Course	*PLO* ***Develop solutions to business problems, using appropriate language and tools.***	*PLO* ***Explain effective business decisions and solutions.***	*PLO* ***Demonstrate professional demeanor.***	*PLO* ***Apply ethical frameworks to business situations.***	*PLO* ***Discuss the effects of culture and ethics in the current global and domestic business environment.***
ENGL 103			***CLO 3***		
HUMA 210				***CLO 4***	
BUSI 207	***CLO 1***	***CLO 1***			***CLO 5***
BUSI 200	***CLO 2*** ***CLO 5***			***CLO 3***	***CLO 4***
ECON 202		***CLO 1***			
	Related ILC *Communication*	*Related ILC* *Critical Thinking*	*Related ILC* *Engagement*	*Related ILC* *Ethical Responsibility*	*Related ILC* *Global Awareness*

Mapping demonstrates that each CLO and course is contributing the appropriate amount of weight in the curriculum. To assure student learning of a program's outcomes, it is necessary for every course learning outcome, in every major-related course, to be mapped to the program's PLOs. In general, there should be five to eight course learning outcomes per course that are carefully aligned to the five program learning outcomes at the I, R, and M levels. SMC encourages this smaller number as every outcome needs to be measured. The more we have in a course, the greater the need for the collection of learning evidence. This also helps to assure that the resulting program map is balanced, rigorous, and relevant while not being overly complicated. In essence, the five to eight course learning outcomes keeps course content manageable for both students and faculty.

Creating Activities that Measure Student Learning

At SMC, we have focused on individual course assessment for the past 20 years. We are familiar with different assessment techniques, including pre- and post-test and project/portfolio assessment. Program assessment is conducted in a similar fashion, although the assessment becomes somewhat larger in scope. A combination of direct and indirect assessment methods are used for assessing PLOs.

Direct assessment methods use either the performance or a product created by students that can demonstrate student attainment of the expected learning outcomes. *Indirect assessment* methods use information that does not directly link learning to the learning outcomes; rather, this information serves as an indicator of learning.

Examples of Direct Assessment Tools:

- Competency tests: programs that have an "exit" exam or an industry certification exam that students take to identify if they qualify to obtain a license or are able to perform the required tasks.
- Artifacts: clearly defined assignments to measure student achievement toward the PLOs.

Examples of Indirect Assessment Tools:

- Advisory Board: an input from an industry advisory board on PLOs reflecting the job skills expected in a particular industry.
- Retention Reports: Showing trends in student performance

More information on direct and indirect measures can be found in the co-curricular section of this manual.

Signature assignments (a.k.a. key assignments/activities) are course learning activities that are used to gather information regarding a student's current disposition in an outcome. They are typically scored using a rubric in order to create consistency in evaluation from student to student and section (activity) to section (activity). In designing the assignment, it may help to work backwards (see appendix for sample rubrics).

1. Think about the outcome in relation to your course content and identify an intersection of the material;
2. Choose an assignment you have that could be used to test the learning;
3. Consider the level of the criterion you want to attain for the outcome;
4. Consider the protocols for grading and norming across sections when applicable;
5. Teach and implement the signature assignment accordingly.

Creating Criterion

A *criterion* is a goal level that is set as the benchmark to meet/surpass (I.E. "*75% of students will…*"). It is important to consider each criterion carefully and individually by outcome. Even though a (hypothetical) 73.4% may need to be obtained to pass a specific class, you may have an outcome noted at the mastery level which would require success at 80% or better on that item. Look at the outcomes as skills for the major; some likely require more proficiency for students to be successful in their career than others and should be weighted accordingly.

Calibration and Norming

When using a rubric for a key assignment, it is important that raters score a particular artifact consistently. This becomes important when there are multiple instructors teaching the same course. When each implements and grades the assignment, we want to be as consistent as possible. It is unlikely that there will be perfect agreement when scoring, but norming allows reviewers to have a consensus on the definition of the criteria which will increase the consistency of rating.

Faculty members score student signature assignments in the SMC assessment process independent from instructor grades. The faculty scorers evaluate the sampled signature assignments across various disciplines using SMC scoring rubrics adapted from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) VALUE rubrics.

Preparing faculty scorers is critical to obtaining reliable results. Meta-rubrics, such as VALUE rubrics, are constructed so that they can be used to score a variety of student artifacts across preparation levels, across disciplines, and across colleges and universities. However, the generality of a meta-rubric makes it more difficult to use than one created for a specific assignment. Calibration is recognized as an essential starting point for the implementation of the scoring rubric. The recommendation for faculty scorers is to attend a workshop, a rubric calibration session, to review the scoring rubrics in detail and to practice scoring benchmark papers. The calibration session is not intended to make changes to the rubrics. During the calibration session, participants are asked to discuss proposed questions and come to agreements on how the rubric's language should be interpreted for the purpose of practice scoring. Once the scoring rubric is reviewed, participants are given a sample of student work to review and score. Practice scoring is typically done one criterion at a time. After each criterion has been scored, the scores are reviewed to determine the degree to which consensus has been reached.

On the day of scoring, faculty scorers work in groups of three. Scoring signature assignments begins with the members of the group independently scoring one signature assignment and discussing their scores. The discussion continues until faculty scorers reach an agreement about their scores. Results of all students in a sample are aggregated and reported as a group for each ILC with no student or faculty names and no other identification information. The results are used for continuous improvement of learning at the program level.

Sampling Size

Small programs or disciplines (which is often the case at SMC) can assess student learning (particularly CLOs) based upon the entire population. Sampling of student artifacts may be appropriate at times when the population of an SMC program/discipline/ILC is large. If you think you may have a situation in which a random sample would be more prudent, discuss it with your chair/dean to determine next steps and adequate sampling numbers for your population.

Reflecting on the Results/Using Data

Periodically, faculty/co curricular staff review their assessment activities/assignments and update both the methods of assessment and standards of success (criterion) with the help of co-faculty, administrators, and staff on their review committee. The assessment cycle requires review and submission of related outcome measures throughout the year at various intervals. Templates and directions for each snapshot are available in the assessment section of Wired.

Required Items:	Each Term	Each Year	Every Three Years
ILC Assessment Template		✓	
PLO Assessment Template		✓	
CLO Assessment Template	✓		
Program Review Template			✓

Developing Plans for Improved Learning

The cycle of assessment is not complete without finding the story in the data and creating initiatives around it that can help move the needle on student success. Filling out assessment templates is not merely an exercise, it requires careful evaluation/discussion around the results. This includes identifying any needed resources to support the classroom/program. Some may require a budgetary request (IE: equipment), while others may not (IE: guest speakers). Even when things are going well, chances are there will be an opportunity to identify an element for improvement and/or something to strive for. The assessment cycle is an exercise in continuous quality improvement, the goal of getting better and better as time goes by, including an eye to

relevance. Relevance changes with time and can be different for populations of learners (IE: traditional versus post-traditional students, minorities versus non-minority groups). Therefore, even an ideal curriculum may be applied differently from term to term. For those outcomes that have less successful results, you should dig deeper to see if there are any common elements that you can identify. Addressing common or frequent points of pain for students will broaden the impact of the strategies you choose to apply in subsequent terms. It is also good to keep in mind that the ultimate goal is to not only enhance learning, but to create equity in learning outcomes for your course/program/activity. Consequently, disaggregated data can be useful to understand how all populations of students are doing.

Celebrating Successes/Identifying Best Practices

While there will always be something that can be done differently to enhance a course/program, there are also elements that can and should be celebrated. Moving the needle from term to term, or year by year, shows that what instructors (or staff) are doing makes a difference. It is a great boost to the team to know they are on the right track. Identify what is going right and what should continue. Every educator has an inherent desire to know they are making a difference. This is one of the best parts of the assessment process; you can clearly see the results. Be sure to take note of the gains, big or small, and give everyone a kudos and pat on the back for their accomplishments. Then, share these accomplishments across the College; there is often much we can learn from one another! As an example, assessment results from the piloting of EDUC120 (Educational Exploration and Planning) led the college to eventually require it for all the Associate level programs. The data, as published by its lead faculty, clearly showed students were more likely to be retained.

Finding Current Learning Assessment Information

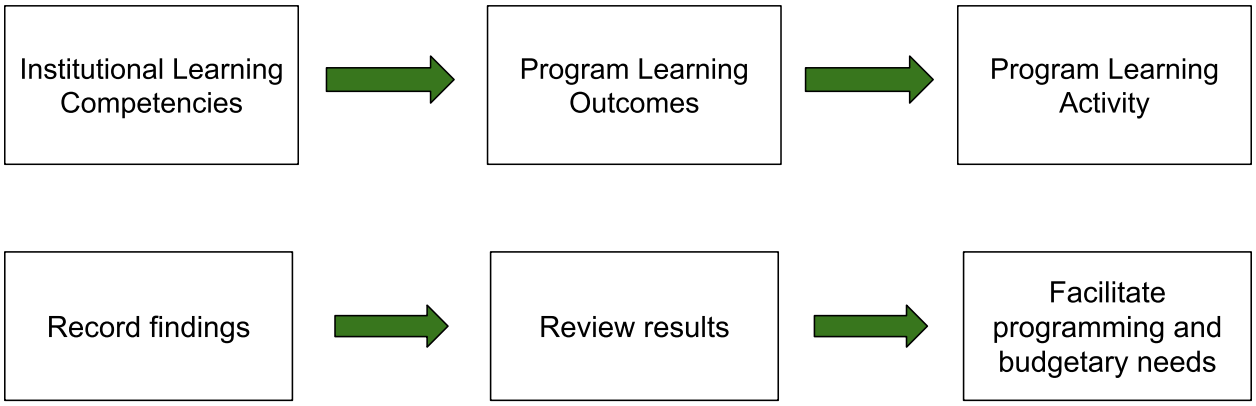
In addition to this manual and the items in the Appendix, faculty can find current forms, information, and various types of examples on our internal portal, *Wired*. To assure you are using the most recent template, or to see what they are doing in other disciplines/programs, go to the *Faculty Resources* tab and click *Faculty Assessments*. There you will find a page devoted to important assessment information.

Co-Curricular Learning Assessment

SMC provides a variety of co-curricular experiences that enrich and support a student's curricular instruction. Students are afforded the opportunity to learn through intentionally designed events, activities, programs, and services that support the Institutional Learning Competencies (ILCs). Co-curricular assessment is an important piece of a student's educational development and helps reinforce our mission, that we provide students a "total college life experience." It also cannot exist in a vacuum, separate from PLOs and CLOs. Results from co-curricular assessment are discussed and celebrated at the same time as curricular assessment.

The purpose of co-curricular assessment is to ensure high quality student programming and services that support learning and create well-rounded members of our community. In addition, co-curricular assessment ensures that we are supporting the mission and vision of the college and continuously improving our departmental learning opportunities for our students.

The co-curricular departments at SMC include: Campus Life, Library Services, Residence Life, Student Development, and the Teaching and Learning Center. Each of these co-curricular departments creates Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) to support the Institutional Learning Competencies (ILCs). These PLOs reflect the core components of the co-curricular department. After each PLO is identified, Program Learning Activities are designed as methods to assess the outcomes for each event's activity. After outcomes are assessed, the embodiment of the included ILC(s) is evaluated and an action plan is determined, as needed, to ensure continuous improvement in the values of the ILC(s). These assessment plans are completed, recorded, and discussed on an annual basis. The information informs programming content as well as annual budgetary considerations.



The following table provides an example of potential measures that can be used to assess the ILCs through co-curricular activities. A template for co-curricular outcome planning and reporting can be found in the appendix.

ILC	PLO	Activity Direct/Indirect	Assessment Method	Criteria
Global Responsibility	Students will demonstrate an appreciation for other cultures	Exit Survey Indirect	Students will be able to identify similarities and differences between their culture and the cultures of other students through an exercise at Convocation	75% of students will accurately report a similarity and difference between their culture and that of another student's

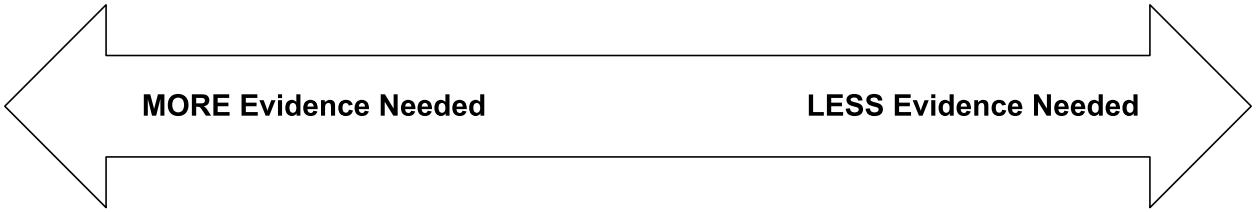
Ethical Responsibility	Students will illustrate ethical decision making regarding their coursework.	Advising Rubric Direct	During advising appointments, students will express their decision making behind course selection, withdrawing from a course, changing major or transferring to a 4-year institution	75% of the students will score a 3.5 or better on the rubric
Critical Thinking	Students will evaluate potential institutions for transfer	Exit Survey Indirect	Students will outline potential and logical transfer schools after attendance at the Transfer Fair.	75% of students will identify potential transfer schools that meet their needs
Communication	Students will assemble the resources needed to gain employment after college	Resume Direct	Students will apply skills learned in Pre-Career/ Internship Fair workshops to create a resume	75% of students will complete a resume using skills learned at the resume writing workshop
Engagement	Students will examine student service departments on campus.	NSO Survey Indirect	Students will identify the responsibilities of student service departments during New Student Orientation	75% of students completing the survey will correctly identify the function of student services departments

Choosing Activities/Measures for Co-Curricular Learning Assessment

Outcome measures are the specific tools (activities) and methods (measures) that generate data and information about students' performance relative to the learning outcomes. *When selecting activities that can be measured for co-curricular assessment it is recommended that each PLO have at least two measurement opportunities.* There are three types of outcome measures available, (1) direct measures, (2) indirect measures, and (3) proxy measures. Each serves an important function in assessment, and when used together they provide a richer perspective of student learning by providing evidence and context to understand how and what students are learning. *Direct* and *Indirect* measures can be used alone or in combination to determine the learning that has occurred. Any other activities that don't fall into these categories are hard to assess. These supporting measures, or *Proxy* measures, should only be used in conjunction with direct and/or indirect means.

Each type of outcome measure serves a particular purpose. Direct measures assess the extent to which students' work meets the learning outcome performance criteria. These are actual samples derived directly from the student that reflect the intended outcome. Indirect measures provide additional evidence, information, and student perspective. These samples utilize secondary information on student learning of the outcomes. Proxy evidence can help triangulate and substantiate the other forms of evidence. These samples corroborate student learning. Proxy evidence should only be used to support other direct/indirect measures; proxy data alone typically does not provide sufficient evidence of learning. Together they provide a richer perspective on student learning by providing evidence and context to understand student performance.

The following graph may be helpful in illustrating the strength of your co-curricular activities/measures in achieving the desired goals for your outcomes assessment. It also provides examples of some of the types of items you could consider, or consider in combination, to achieve your goals.



Proxy
Provides supporting evidence, but is not sufficient on its own

Examples
- Usage data
- Satisfaction
- Employment rates

Indirect
Measures something by measuring something else (secondary information)

Examples
- Surveys
- Group Discussion
- Focus Groups
- Reflection Essays
- Graduation/Retention Reports

Direct
Measures exactly the thing that you are looking to measure (actual samples)

Examples
- Projects
- Performance
- Test/Quiz
- Portfolio

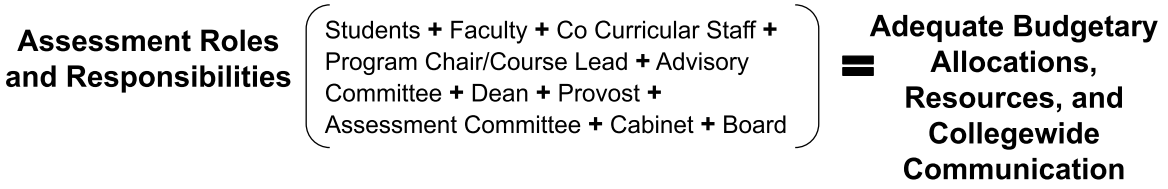
When faced with a variety of activities to choose from, it may still be difficult for the department/program to decide which are the best. Therefore, it is also prudent to ask four specific questions for evaluating your outcomes measures. If your program staff are able to answer “yes” to all four questions, it is likely that you have a strong set of measures.

- Does the activity (measure) provide sufficient data and information to analyze the learning outcome?
- Does the activity (measure) require a reasonable amount of work to collect?
- Does the activity (measure) establish a performance level to help guide future analysis?
- Is it possible to sustain the activity (measure), or similar, annually?

Using Learning Assessment Across the College

With the knowledge accumulated through the curricular and co-curricular assessment process, the College is better able to design, develop, and implement effective strategies that move the needle on student learning. When everyone rows in the same direction, information flows from the instructor to the department, from the department to the Program Lead, from the Program Lead to the School’s Dean, from the School’s Dean to the Provost, from the Provost to Cabinet, and from Cabinet to the SMC Board of Trustees. This cadence ensures that any resources that are needed are captured and moved forward in a systematic way. Within the capital budgeting process, for instance, all requests must show alignment with the College’s Strategic Plan. In addition, it provides communication from every direction on what is occurring at the College in the classroom, during co curricular activities, and beyond. The following highlights just some of the roles individuals or departments play in the assessment process.

Learning Assessment Roles and Responsibilities



Students

- Participate in course, program and co-curricular program assessments as provided by faculty, staff, advisors, and administrators;
- Understand, through faculty and college communication (I.E. syllabi. College catalog, etc.), that they are learning about the content of their major as well as growing in the values needed to engage responsibly in their future communities (locale, work, family etc.);
- See their learning as the heart of their SMC educational experience.

Faculty

- Are aware of the institution's mission, ILCs, and current strategic plan as it relates to their programs/courses/students;
- Develop program learning outcomes (5) with their colleagues in the department, each aligning to an SMC Institutional Learning Competency and reflective of the College mission;
- As applicable by program, develop an assessment plan within each program, in conjunction with appropriate other faculty, that provides evidence of student learning of CLOs, PLOs, and ILCs and is consistent with SMCs assessment model, guidelines, and procedures;
- Review PLOs with the School Dean;
- Develop courses with measurable course learning outcomes;
- Review CLOs with applicable faculty (i.e. between general education and the major, as one example);
- Develop an assessment plan within each course to capture student learning of the CLOs, PLOs, and ILCs (when applicable) that is consistent with SMCs assessment model, guidelines, and procedures;
- Review the assessment plan with their academic leadership; (ideally the process is created in unison);
- Document learning outcomes and results of assessment activities at the end of each semester;
- Review the results across the department and explore trends, gaps, sudden changes, and the like through engaged discussion, student artifacts, and past reports;
- Where applicable, establish an advisory committee, hold any applicable advisory meeting at least once per year (Advisory Committee information can be found in the Appendix), and file advisory meeting minutes with the annual program assessment report;

- Determine where changes need to be made, or resources that are needed;
- Create short-term and long-range departmental plans and budgetary requests;
- Provide the chair/dean with departmental planning information by completing the templates associated with the assessment cycle and discussing the needs.

Advisory Committee Members

- Review program outcomes and curricular changes;
- Reflect and provide feedback on assessment results;
- Recommend possible changes to curriculum and/or assessment tools based on the analysis of the results;
- Meet a minimum of once annually.

Co-Curricular Staff

- Are aware of the institution's mission, ILCs, and current strategic plan as it relates to their programming;
- Develop a mission statement;
- Develop program learning outcomes (5) with their colleagues in the department, and the Dean of Student Development's guidance, that align to each SMC Institutional Learning Competency;
- Develop programs/events that incorporate assessment activities and processes for the ILCs and PLOs;
- Document results of assessment activities at the end of each term/academic year as required;
- Review the results across the department and explore trends, gaps, sudden changes, and the like through engaged discussion, student artifacts, and past reports;
- Determine where changes need to be made, or resources that are needed;
- Create short-term and long-range departmental plans and budgetary requests;
- Provide the applicable supervisor with departmental planning information by completing the templates associated with the assessment cycle and discussing the needs.

Dean

- Working in consultation with the applicable departmental faculty, ensure CLOs reviews occur at the end of each term;
- Lead the applicable departmental faculty in the completion of PLO/ILC review/documentation wannually by reviewing the CLO reports and student artifacts to determine the effectiveness of program assessment, budgetary needs, recommendations for changes/ revisions, timelines to implement (short term and long term), and plan for communicating the results to the School and College;
- Reviews and provides feedback on the assessment plans of each department with the appropriate director, chair, or lead;
- Reviews the results of assessment activities with the director, chair, or lead;
- Organizes the Schools' assessment plans and assures the Provost has them on file;
- Communicates assessment results to the Provost and advocates for resources and budgetary items identified in the process.

Provost

- Works with deans to assure assessment plans are on file in the Provost's office;
- Ensures that assessment plans are applied consistently across academic departments, the library, the teaching & learning center, and student development (advising).
- Reviews the highlights of program/ILC assessment results with the deans;
- Communicates assessment results to the Cabinet and advocates for resources and budgetary items identified during the process.

Learning Assessment Committee

- Provides oversight for assessment discussions to ensure comprehensive assessment of student learning;
- Provides recommendations to Provost regarding best practices;
- Ensures, through college-wide representation, that institutional needs related to good assessment practices are addressed.

Cabinet

- Reviews and comments on the assessment results communicated by the Provost;
- Ensures that the assessment plan is applied consistently across the college;
- Communicates assessment findings to the Board;
- Reviews and makes recommendations to the Board regarding budgetary needs identified through the assessment process.

Board

- Provides feedback on the outcomes of the assessment process;
- Supports and funds needs identified to improve student learning.

Note that, like assessment itself, SMC's process for ensuring assessment occurs regularly and effectively is also subject to continuous quality improvement, and recommendations related to these responsibilities (e.g. the College needs to appoint an Assessment Coordinator) will occur as the evidence suggests.

APPENDIX

Institutional Learning Competencies (ILCs)

Communication is the purposeful development of the expression and reception of verbal and non-verbal ideas and information.

Critical Thinking is a set of essential skills using inductive and deductive reasoning for the purposes of developing creative and effective solutions to a given problem

Engagement is the application of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion for learning through curricular and co-curricular experiences

Ethical Responsibility is the thoughtful consideration about what is right and wrong and about making a positive impact upon one's community - locally, nationally, and/or globally. The practice of ethical responsibility arises when individuals confront challenges, choices, and ethical dilemmas and requires skill in assessing and articulating various ethical positions, analyzing the social contexts of problems, and considering the ramifications of various courses of action for oneself as well as the community.

Global Awareness is the knowledge of the interdependence of local, global, international, and intercultural people, societies, issues, trends, and systems, and an ability to apply this cultural and global awareness to human interaction and expression.

Learning Assessment Glossary

Assessment: A logical extension of teaching that enables faculty to determine whether learning did indeed occur. If assessment results fall short of performance goals, there is an opportunity to thoroughly investigate courses and programs to identify areas in which improvements can be made. The timeless question posed is, “Are students learning, how do we know?”

CLA: Course Learning Activity - An activity in a course designed to measure learning of an associated outcome.

CLO: Course Learning Outcome - These statements outline what students will know and be able to do at the end of a course. These are also noted in academic narrative as course student learning outcomes, such as in HLC guidelines. CLOs are mapped to Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) to assure that the larger purpose of a department’s goals are collectively met.

Co-Curricular:

> *Per HLC* “Learning activities, programs, and experiences that reinforce the institution’s mission and values and complement the formal curriculum.”
>
> *Per SMC*: “Co-curricular experiences enrich the student learning environment by providing opportunities for students to learn from intentionally designed activities, events, and services that extend and complement classroom learning.”

Criterion: A goal level that is set as the benchmark to meet/surpass. “75% of the students will…”

Equity: The level of unique support needed to attain equal outcomes. Supports may differ for individuals based upon socio-economic status, opportunities, resources, and the like. Equity aims to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent full participation and equal attainment.

ILC: Institutional Learning Competency, SMC has five: global awareness, critical thinking, ethical behavior, communication, and engagement

Introductory: Serves as a beginning point for a specific topic/competency

Mastery: To be competent. To acquire/possess roughly 80% or more of the knowledge related to a specific topic/skill/competency

Outcome Result: The actual number or percent of students that met the criterion

PLO: Program Learning Outcome - These statements outline what students will know and be able to do at the end of a program. These goals are accomplished through the various courses and their CLOs.

Reinforced: Information that strengthens the students' knowledge of a specific topic/competency

Rubric: A scoring tool that explicitly represents the performance expectations for an assignment or piece of work. *Grading rubrics* are designed to provide a grade-based evaluation. VALUE Rubrics use a Likert scale to score student beliefs/attitudes related to ILCs (not grade-based).

Signature Assignment: A CLA that is used to gather information regarding a student's current disposition in a specific ILC

VALUE Rubric: Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education. Established by 2-year and 4-year faculty through the American Association of Colleges and Universities. Used to ascertain (not grade) beliefs, attitudes, and actions such as critical thinking, global awareness, ethical behavior, communication, and engagement

Higher Learning Commission – Criteria For Accreditation

Criterion 1. Mission – The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution.

1. The mission was developed through a process suited to the context of the institution.
2. The mission and related statements are current and reference the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission and related statements identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides.
4. The institution's academic offerings, student support services and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
5. The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

1. The institution encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.
2. The institution's processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.
3. The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.

Criterion 2. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct –The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution establishes and follows policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty and staff.

1. The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission.
2. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources and auxiliary functions.

2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public.

1. The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships.
2. The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development.

2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution in compliance with board policies and to ensure the institution's integrity.

1. The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions with respect to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
3. The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
4. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties.
5. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution's administration and expects the institution's faculty to oversee academic matters.

2.D - Core Component 2.D

The institution is committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

2.E - Core Component 2.E

The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, staff and students.

1. Institutions supporting basic and applied research maintain professional standards and provide oversight ensuring regulatory compliance, ethical behavior and fiscal accountability.
2. The institution provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff and students.
3. The institution provides students guidance in the ethics of research and use of information resources.
4. The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Criterion 3. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support – The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The rigor of the institution's academic offerings is appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings and degree levels of the institution. The institution articulates the purposes, content and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements.
2. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and

attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.
4. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.

3.C - Core Component 3.C

The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution strives to ensure that the overall composition of its faculty and staff reflects human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.
2. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance, assessment of student learning, and establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff.
3. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual and consortial offerings.
4. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
5. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
6. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
7. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising and cocurricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained and supported in their professional development.

3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and resources for effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.

3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its offerings and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites and museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).

Criterion 4. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement – The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It ensures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission.

4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.

1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.

2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence and completion that are ambitious, attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Criterion 5. Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning – The institution's resources, structures, processes, and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

5.A - Core Component 5.A

Through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution's leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. Shared governance at the institution engages its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff and students—through planning, policies and procedures.
2. The institution's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents.
3. The institution's administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy and processes through effective collaborative structures.

5.B - Core Component 5.B

The institution's resource base supports its educational offerings and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

1. The institution has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The goals incorporated into the mission and any related statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources and opportunities.
3. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring its finances.
4. The institution's fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes and affiliated centers.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity, including fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.
5. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.
6. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.

Source: 2022 Higher Learning Commission Resource Guide

Advisory Committees

While advisory committees and boards are valuable for all occupational programs in order to remain current by directly connecting our faculty with the industry, the programs that are state approved under the Perkins Grant are required to maintain them. For this reason, the state of Michigan provides a "toolkit" for the creation and facilitation of advisory committees. This toolkit speaks in generalities for those involved in facilitating the Perkins Grant (secondary and postsecondary institutions). Secondary and postsecondary facilitation of advisory committees may look a little different, however, so the guidelines may need to be adjusted based upon the level of the institution.

In general, state approved CTE programs must have advisory committees consisting of specific constituents, an agenda that includes specific topics such as a curriculum and budget review, and meetings must be recorded twice per year (in the grant timeline of July 1 to June 30). These two meetings, however, can be combined with those occurring regionally. For example, SMC may have its own Robotics/Welding Advisory Board that meets once per year. Berrien RESA may have another committee for their CTE programs that SMC participates on. Each of these annual meetings will discuss similar information given the required agendas (curriculum, budget etc.) Therefore, the notes from each can be kept by SMC as evidence that two conversations with the advisory committees occurred in the year to support the program(s).

Resources for Mapping and Writing Learning Outcomes

Bloom's Taxonomy in 5 Minutes - VIDEO Simplilearn

Developing Student Outcome Statements - Georgia Tech

How to Write Measurable Learning Outcomes - *VIDEO* How to Canvas

How to Write Learning Objectives with Bloom's Taxonomy - VIDEO by Devlin Peck

IMPACT Resources for Teaching and Learning - Purdue University

Learning Outcomes and Bloom's Taxonomy - Wayne State

Mapping Learning: A Toolkit - National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment - NILOA

Quick Tips for Writing Outcomes - Rensselaer

Quick Guide to Program Curriculum Mapping - University of Northern Colorado

Program Mapping - Wiley

Student Learning Assessment - University of Wisconsin - Madison

Writing Student Outcomes - *VIDEO* by Mary Thompson and Regina Lowry

ILC Rubrics

The following rubrics were created using the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) Rubric (2018) and are amended with permission. Retrieved from https://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics

Communication: The purposeful development of the expression and reception of verbal and non-verbal ideas and information

	Mastered (M)	**Reinforced (R)**	**Introduced (I)**
Context, Audience, and Purpose	Demonstrates understanding of context, audience, and purpose.	Demonstrates consideration of context, audience, and purpose.	Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, and purpose.
Content Development	Uses appropriate and relevant content to illustrate mastery of the subject.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to explore ideas within the context.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas within the context.
Genre and Disciplinary Conventions	Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution to a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline, including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices.	Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline, including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices.	Demonstrates consistent system for basic organization and presentation.
Sources and Evidence	Demonstrates skillful use of credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre.	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre.	Demonstrates introductory skill in the use of sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre.
Language Usage	Uses language that skillfully, with clarity and fluency, communicates meaning to the audience.	Uses language that skillfully conveys meaning to the audience.	Uses language that conveys meaning to the audience.

Critical Thinking: The set of essential skills using inductive and deductive reasoning for the purposes of developing creative and effective solutions to a given problem

	Mastered (M)	**Reinforced (R)**	**Introduced (I)**
Define Problem	Demonstrates the ability to construct a clear and insightful problem statement with evidence of relevant contextual factors.	Demonstrates the ability to construct an adequately detailed problem statement.	Begins to demonstrate the ability to construct a problem statement with evidence of relevant contextual factors.
Identify Strategies	dentifies multiple approaches to solving the problem that pply within a specific context.	dentifies multiple approaches for solving the problem, only some of which apply within a specific context.	Identifies at least one approach for solving the problem that does apply within a specific content.
Propose Solutions/ Hypotheses	Proposes solutions/hypotheses that indicate a deep comprehension of the problem.	Proposes solutions/hypotheses that ndicate comprehension of the problem.	Proposes one solution/hypothesis that indicates comprehension of the problem.
Implement Solution	Implements the solution in a manner that addresses horoughly multiple contextual factors of the problem.	Implements the solution in a anner that addresses at least two contextual factors of the problem.	Implements the solution in a manner that addresses at east one contextual factor of the problem.
Evaluate Outcomes	Conclusions and related utcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student's informed valuation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.	Conclusion is logically tied to a ange of information, including opposing viewpoints; related utcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Begins to logically tie conclusion to information; some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.

Engagement: The application of curiosity, interest, passion, transfer, and reflection

	Mastered (M)	**Reinforced (R)**	**Introduced (I)**
Curiosity	Explores a topic in depth, yielding awareness and interest in the subject.	Explores a topic in depth and indicates interest in the subject.	Explores a topic and indicates the beginner's interest in the subject.
Interest	Completes required work, generates, and pursues opportunities to expand knowledge, skills, and abilities.	Completes required work, identifies opportunities to expand knowledge, skills, and abilities.	Completes required work; begins to show interest in expanding knowledge, skill, and abilities.
Passion	Educational interests and pursuits are evident. Knowledge and/or experiences are pursued independently.	Educational interest and pursuits are evident.	Begins to show interest in pursuing educational experiences.
Transfer	Makes explicit reference to previous learning and applies that knowledge and those skills to demonstrate comprehension and performance in novel situations.	Makes references to previous learning and shows evidence of applying that knowledge and those skills to demonstrate comprehension and performance in novel situations.	Makes references to previous learning and attempts to apply that knowledge and those skills to demonstrate comprehension and performance in novel situations.
Reflection	Reviews prior learning (past experiences inside and outside of the classroom) to reveal changed perspectives about educational and life experiences, which provide foundation for expanded knowledge, growth, and maturity over time.	Reviews prior learning (past experiences inside and outside of the classroom) to review fully clarified meanings or indicate broader perspectives about educational or life events.	Begins to review prior learning (past experiences inside and outside of the classroom) to review meanings or indicating broader perspectives about educational or life events.

Ethical Responsibility: The thoughtful consideration about what is right and wrong and about making a positive impact upon one's community - locally, nationally, and/or globally. The practice of ethical responsibility arises when individuals confront challenges, choices, and ethical dilemmas and requires skill in assessing and articulating various ethical positions, analyzing the social contexts of problems, and considering the ramifications of various courses of action for oneself as well as the community

	Mastered (M)	**Reinforced (R)**	**Introduced (I)**
Ethical Self-Awareness	Discusses in detail/analyzes both core beliefs and the origins of the core beliefs.	Discusses both core beliefs and the origins of the core beliefs.	States both of core beliefs and the origins of the core beliefs.
Understanding Different Ethical Perspectives/ Concepts	Names theories and accurately explains the major points in each theory.	Names major theories and can explain at least three of those	Name major theories and is able to present the gist of those.
Ethical Issue Recognition	Recognize ethical issues when presented in a complex multilayered context and recognizes cross-relationships among the issues.	Applies ethical perspectives and grasp the complexities or interrelationships among the issues.	Recognize basic and obvious ethical issues.
Application of Ethical Perspectives/ Concepts	Applies ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question and can consider full implications of the applications.	Applies ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question.	Applies ethical perspective/concepts to an ethical question with support (using examples).
Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/ Concepts	States a position and can state the objections to, assumptions and implications of and can reasonably defend against the objections to, assumptions and implications of different ethical perspectives/concepts.	States a position and can state the objections to, assumptions and implications of and respond to the objections to, assumptions and implications of different ethical perspectives/concepts.	States a position and can state the objections to, assumptions and implications of different ethical perspectives/ concepts.

Global Awareness and Appreciation: The knowledge of the interdependence of local, global, international, and intercultural people, societies, issues, trends, and systems, and an ability to apply this cultural and global awareness to human interaction and expression

	Mastered (M)	**Reinforced (R)**	**Introduced (I)**
Global Self-Awareness	Effectively addresses significant issues in a local and in a global context.	Evaluates the global impact of one's own and others' specific local actions on the natural and human world.	Identifies connections between an individual's personal decision-making and certain local and global issues.
Perspective Taking	Evaluates and applies diverse perspectives to subjects within natural and human systems in the face of multiple (and even conflicting) positions.	Identifies and explains diverse perspectives to subjects within natural and human systems in the face of multiple positions.	Identifies cultural and ethical perspectives and their relation to own perspectives.
Cultural Diversity	Analyzes connections between the worldviews and experiences of multiple cultures historically or in a contemporary context.	Explains connections between the worldviews and experiences of multiple cultures historically or in a contemporary context.	Identifies connections between the worldviews and experiences of multiple cultures historically or in a contemporary context.
Understanding Global Systems	Analyzes major elements of global system, including their interconnections and effects of human organizations and actions.	Explains major elements of global system, including their interconnections and effects of human organizations and actions.	Identifies major elements of global system, including their interconnections and effects of human organizations and actions.
Applying Knowledge of Global Systems	Evaluate solutions to global challenges that are appropriate to their context using multiple disciplinary perspectives (such as cultural, historical, and scientific).	Formulates solutions to global challenges that are appropriate to their context using multiple disciplinary perspectives (such as cultural, historical, and scientific).	Defines global challenges.

ILC Integration Map *(revised April 2022)*

Institutional Learning Competency (ILC)	**General Education Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA) Courses**	**Major-required Courses**
Communication	ENGL 103 ENGL 104 PSYC 102 SPEE 104	BUSI 214 EDUC 208 ELEC 208 ISYS 282 HIMS 255 MEDA 240 MEDA 250 NURS 209 NURS 249
Critical Thinking	ART 204 BIOL 102 BIOL 215 ECON 202 ENGL 232 ENGL 261 HIST 202 MATH 127 MATH 128 MUSI 202 MATH 205 PSYC 296	ART 230 ACCO 212 AUTO 229 BUSI 212 BUSI 225 COMM 115 CONS 169 CRIM 111 EDUC 217 ELEC 234 FISC 111 HIMS 255 ISYS 285 MEDA 240 MEDA 250 MRI 222 NDXT 232 NURS 209 NURS 249 PHED 210 SOWK 200
Engagement	ENGL 261 ENGL 263 MUSI 102 PHYS 102 PHYS 202 SOCI 201 SOCI 203	ART 261 AUTO 223 BUSI 200 BUSI 201 BUSI 220 CONS 180 EDUC 260 FISC 112 HIMS 255 HIMS 290 INTE 245 ISYS 207 MEDA 240 MEDA 250 MRI 241 NDXT 221 NURS 209 NURS 249 PHED 215

Ethical Responsibility	ART 203 CHEM 202 ENGL 282 MUSI 203 PHIL 201 PHIL 210 POSC 201 PSYC 101 SOCI 201	ART 265 AUTO 216 BUSI 207 CONS 165 CRIM 113 EDUC 210 EDUC 222 HEED 132 HIMS 255 INTE 126 INTE 227 ISYS 281 MEDA 240 MEDA 250 MRI 263 NURS 209 NURS 212 NURS 249 PSC 180
Global Awareness and Appreciation	ECON 202 ENST 112 HUMA 204 HUMA 210 PHIL 201 SOCI 240	ACCO 212 ART 220 AUTO 246 BUSI 220 CONS 150 EDUC 220 ELEC 119 FISC 213 HIMS 255 MEDA 240 MEDA 250 MRI 201 MUSI 204 NDXT 230 NURS 209 NURS 212 NURS 249

How to Create a Signature Assignment w/ Example

If you have a course(s) in the Program Map that is designated as “M”, a Signature Assignment is needed. The assignment likely already exists, yet you may need to expand language within it to include room for student perceptions related to the assigned ILC.

In designing the activity, it may help to work backwards.

1. Think about the ILC in relation to your course content and identify an intersection

I.E.: In ISYS 281, digital file security and how to grant access/permissions are taught. The ILC for the course is Ethical Responsibility. There is a natural intersection of the material and ILC that allows students to think more deeply about the why (perception/value) and not just the how (course content)

2. Choose an assignment you have that could be easily adjusted through an added question, reflection, observation, or any other learning activity

I.E.: In ISYS 281, a task was added to an existing assignment. Create a security policy based on your reading from chapter 11. The information you will provide should be based on more than just technical aspects. How would you devise an ethical security policy based on the following scenarios…?

3. Note the Course Learning Outcome (CLO) that the Signature Assignment aligns with and assure the Bloom verbs agree

I.E.: In ISYS 281, CLO 3: Implement Best practice desktop security configurations. Note that the verb in the assignment (create) is on the same Bloom’s Taxonomy level as the CLO (implement)

4. Adapt the corresponding VALUE rubric. The categories need to remain the same, but you may customize the definitions. You can anticipate grading the assignment as you always have for the course. After grading, use the customized VALUE rubric to capture the ILC information

I.E.: In ISYS 281, the amended VALUE rubric looks like this…

Network Access Policy
VALUE Rubric: Ethical Responsibility

Ethical Self-Awareness

- Discussed in detail and analyzed information based upon core beliefs

Excellent				Extremely Weak
5	4	3	2	1

Understanding Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts

- Accurately explained challenges and major points of consideration

Excellent				Extremely Weak
5	4	3	2	1

Ethical Issue Recognition

- Recognized that ethical issues are complex and multilayered

Excellent				Extremely Weak
5	4	3	2	1

Application of Ethical Perspectives/Concepts

- Considered the full implications of the policy

Excellent				Extremely Weak
5	4	3	2	1

Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts

- Stated a position in the policy and reasonably defended it in an ethical manner

Excellent				Extremely Weak
5	4	3	2	1

Rubric Total: _____

Rubric Average (Total divided by 5): _____

5. Write up the assignment in a format similar to this and submit it to your Chair.

ISYS 281, Installing Windows Server

ILC 4: Ethical Responsibility

Level: Mastered

CLO 3:

Implement Best practice desktop security configurations

CLA-11: Network Access Policy – Ch11 Managing and Securing Windows Networks
Create a security policy based on your reading from chapter 11. The information you will provide should be based on more than just technical aspects. How would you devise an ethical security policy based on the following scenarios?

· Based on their role within an organization, should high-level IT-administrators be granted broad control over a given network environment? Explain what processes you would implement to audit an IT-administrator.
· Is job rotation for IT-professionals a good strategy for every use case? Provide an explanation of how job rotation would benefit an IT department.
· When organizations fall victim to ransomware, they are sometimes encouraged to just pay the ransom in hopes that they can retrieve their stolen data. Payment is often given, because many small businesses may not have a robust process to backup/protect their intellectual property. Companies are also encouraged to pay the ransom, because they have insurance policies in place, for just such occurrences. Explain why developing a security baseline for all network devices is important and what steps would put in place to ensure that paying a ransom would never be necessary.

Program Curriculum Map

Program:

Academic Year:

		1.PLO	2.PLO	3.PLO	4.PLO	5.PLO
Major-Required Course	Course Title	Course Learning Outcome(s)	Course Learning Outcome(s)	Course Learning Outcome(s)	Course Learning Outcome(s)	Course Learning Outcome(s)
Course 1						
Course 2						
Course 3						
Course 4						
Course 5						
Course 6						
Course 7						

QM Standards: Best Practices

Contents

General Standard 2 - Learning Objectives (Competencies)

Learning objectives or competencies describe what learners will be able to do upon completion of the course.

Overview Statement: The learning objectives or competencies establish a foundation upon which the rest of the course is based.

Specific Review Standard 2.1

The course learning objectives, or course/program competencies, describe outcomes that are measurable.

Points: 3

Annotation for Specific Review Standard 2.1:

Alignment: The concept of alignment is intended to convey the idea that critical course components work together to ensure that learners achieve the desired learning outcomes. Measurable course and module/unit-level learning objectives or competencies form the basis of alignment in a course. Other elements of the course, including those addressed in Specific Review Standards 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, and 6.1, contribute to the accomplishment of the learning objectives or competencies.

Measurable course learning objectives or competencies precisely and clearly describe what learners will learn and be able to do if they successfully complete the course. Course objectives or competencies describe desired learner mastery using terms that are specific and observable enough to be measured by the instructor. At some institutions, learning objectives or competencies may be called “learning outcomes.” See the Glossary for a distinction between these two terms.

If the Course Worksheet indicates institutionally mandated learning objectives/competencies are used in the course, see Special Situations at the end of this Annotation for directions.

Examples of measurable learning outcomes or competencies:

Upon completion of the course (module/unit), learners will be able to:

1. Select appropriate tax strategies for different financial and personal situations.

2. Develop a comprehensive, individualized wellness action program focused on overcoming a sedentary life-style.

3. Demonstrate correct use of personal protective equipment.

4. Articulate personal attitudes and values related to the use of medical marijuana.

5. Apply microeconomic principles to explain why environmental problems occur.

6. Create original musical compositions using computer technology.

7. Analyze a business situation to determine an information management need.

Examples of learning outcomes or competencies that are **not** measurable:

Upon completion of the course (module/unit), learners will be able to:

1. Understand the nature of reasoning.

2. Demonstrate understanding of the role of digital marketing.

3. Know basic statistical vocabulary and appropriate data collection methods.

4. Learn the basic elements of a media production software interface.

5. Be aware of the grammar conventions of standard American English.

6. Realize the significance of recent advances in genetic research.

7. Demonstrate an appreciation of contemporary art.

These types of learning outcomes are very difficult, if not impossible, to measure.

Reviewers look for measurable learning objectives or competencies that describe what learners will be able to do once they “understand” or “know” or “realize” a concept in the course. For example, a learning objective or competency that calls for the learner to “understand the nature

of reasoning" could become a measurable learning objective or competency by recommending that "understand" be replaced by the verb "explain": "Explain the nature of reasoning."

In a course in which learners are expected to demonstrate "core competencies," such as analytical skills or ability to express themselves effectively in writing or in other forms of communication, the course includes a reference to these foundational, core objectives or competencies in addition to objectives or competencies that relate to course-specific mastery of content. For instance, if the institution has a writing-across-the-curriculum requirement, the instructor of a course in economics may be expected to evaluate the effectiveness of learners' writing as well as their mastery of principles of economics. Accordingly, objectives or competencies related to writing effectiveness will be included in the course.

In addition to measurable objectives or competencies, a course may have objectives or competencies or desired outcomes that are not easily measured, such as increased awareness of, sensitivity to, or interest in certain issues or subjects, or ability to work as a team member on a group project. Such objectives or competencies cannot be substituted for measurable objectives or competencies when determining whether Specific Review Standard 2.1 is met. In order for the Specific Review Standard to be met, a majority (85%) of the course-level objectives or competencies must be measurable.

Special Situations: In some cases (check the Course Worksheet), the course objectives or competencies are institutionally mandated, and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. If the institutionally mandated learning objectives or competencies are not measurable, make note of it in your recommendations. Write specific suggestions for improvement that can be used at the institution level to frame objectives or competencies in terms that are measurable. If the course objectives or competencies are institutionally mandated, then the reviewer may need to consider Specific Review Standard 2.1 in conjunction with Specific Review Standard 2.2, as follows:

Specific Review Standard 2.1 is MET under either of the following circumstances:

1. The course objectives or competencies are measurable, whether set by the institution or by the instructor.

2. The institutionally mandated course objectives or competencies are not measurable, but the instructor-written module/unit-level objectives or competencies are measurable and aligned with the course objectives or competencies.

Specific Review Standard 2.1 is NOT MET under any of the following circumstances:

1. There are no stated course objectives or competencies.

2. The course objectives or competencies set by the instructor are not measurable.

3. The institutionally mandated course objectives or competencies are not measurable, and the instructor-written module/unit-level objectives or competencies are either not measurable or not present.

If Specific Review Standard 2.1 is not met, it is not possible to complete the course review. If you determine this Specific Review Standard is “Not Met,” consult with the Team Chair before proceeding with your review. In such a case, the review is suspended and the Team Chair consults the Course Representative to clarify whether or not the matter can be quickly addressed so the review can continue.

Specific Review Standard 2.2

The module/unit-level learning objectives or competencies describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives or competencies.

Points: 3

Annotation for Specific Review Standard 2.2:

Alignment: The concept of alignment is intended to convey the idea that critical course components work together to ensure that learners achieve the desired learning outcomes. Measurable module/unit-level learning objectives or competencies form the basis of alignment in a course because they are consistent with the course-level objectives or competencies (2.1). Objectives or competencies explain how learners will be assessed (3.1). Instructional materials (4.1), learning activities (5.1), and tools used in the course (6.1) contribute to the accomplishment of the learning objectives or competencies.

Learning objectives or competencies at the module/unit-level align with and are more specific than course objectives or competencies. The module/unit-level learning objectives or competencies describe learner mastery in specific, observable terms and in smaller, discrete pieces. The objectives or competencies precisely describe the specific competencies, skills, and knowledge learners are able to master and demonstrate at regular intervals throughout the

course. The module/unit-level objectives or competencies may either implicitly or explicitly be aligned with the course-level objectives or competencies. If alignment is not clear, consult with Subject Matter Expert on the team to determine alignment.

Here is an example of a set of module/unit-level objectives or competencies that aligns with a course objective or competency:

Course Objective or Competency: Upon completion of this course, learners will be able to apply the rules of punctuation.

Module Objectives or Competencies:

1. Learners will write sentences that correctly use commas, semicolons, and periods.

2. Learners will use apostrophes when, and only when, needed.

3. Learners will use double and single quotation marks correctly in quoted material.

Module or unit objectives or competencies may be written by the instructor or may come from one or more of the instructional materials. Regardless of origin, module or unit objectives or competencies must be measurable. At some institutions learning objectives or competencies may be referred to as “learning outcomes.”

Specific Review Standard 2.2 is MET under either of the following circumstances:

1. The module or unit-level objectives or competencies are measurable and aligned with the course objectives or competencies.

2. The institutionally mandated course objectives or competencies are not measurable, but the instructor-written module/unit-level objectives or competencies are measurable and aligned with the course objectives or competencies.

Specific Review Standard 2.2 is NOT MET under any of the following circumstances:

1. There are no stated module or unit-level objectives or competencies.

2. The module or unit-level learning objectives or competencies set by the instructor are not measurable.

3. The institutionally mandated course objectives or competencies are not measurable, and the instructor-written module/unit-level objectives or competencies are measurable but do not align with the course objectives or competencies.

If Specific Review Standard 2.2 is NOT MET, it is not possible to complete the course review. If you determine this Specific Review Standard is "Not Met," consult with the Team Chair before proceeding with your review. In such a case, the review is suspended and the Team Chair consults the Course Representative to clarify whether or not the matter can be quickly addressed so the review can continue.

Specific Review Standard 2.3

Learning objectives or competencies are stated clearly, are written from the learner's perspective, and are prominently located in the course.

Points: 3

Annotation for Specific Review Standard 2.3:

The course and module/unit-level learning objectives or competencies are stated clearly and prominently in the online classroom. The learning objectives or competencies are written in a way that allows learners, including non-native speakers, to easily grasp their meaning and the learning outcomes expected. The use of educational or discipline jargon, unexplained terminology, and unnecessarily complex language is avoided.

The course-level objectives or competencies are typically articulated in the course introduction or syllabus. Module/Unit-level learning objectives or competencies are prominently stated in the corresponding module or unit so they are available to the learner from within the online classroom.

Confirm all three parts of the Specific Review Standard are met. If only one part of the Specific Review Standard is met, the Specific Review Standard is not met.

Blended Courses: In addition to being provided in the face-to-face classroom, the learning objectives or competencies are stated in the online classroom.

Specific Review Standard 2.4

The relationship between learning objectives or competencies and learning activities is clearly stated.

Points: 3

Annotation for Specific Review Standard 2.4:

Confirm that the connection between the learning objectives and assigned learning activities is clearly explained. Making explicit the relationship between learning objectives or competencies and learning activities enables learners to understand that achieving the stated learning objectives or competencies is the reason they are being asked to complete the required learning activities. The learning activities should not be seen as arbitrary or unconnected; their purpose in the course is explained in terms of the learning objectives or competencies.

Examples of course components that clarify the relationship:

1. A course map shows how the learning objectives or competencies connect to the learning activities.

2. A module or unit introductory page is provided with a summary or overview of module- or unit-level learning objectives or competencies, related course-level learning objectives or competencies, and course activities (learning activities, assessments, and use of instructional materials).

3. An explanation is provided for how the course-level and module- or unit-level learning objectives or competencies are met through each learning activity.

4. A numbering system demonstrates the relationship between course-level objectives or competencies, module- or unit-level objectives or competencies, and learning activities.

A course map or numbering system is not required for this Specific Review Standard to be met. However, if a course map or numbering system is used in the course, the review team verifies that the course design reflects the mapping or numbering system accurately for the entirety of the course.

Reviewers, consider both the course and module or unit learning objectives or competencies in your review of this Specific Review Standard. Look for information indicating which learning activities, instructional materials, assignments, and assessments support specific learning

objectives or competencies. Learning objectives or competencies are usually reiterated throughout the course with their corresponding learning activities.

"Learning activities" are those activities that help learners meet the learning objectives. All "learning activities" are "course activities"; however, not all "course activities" are "learning activities." Some activities, like downloading software or creating presence through introductions, would be "course activities" that are not necessarily "learning activities."

See Specific Review Standard 4.2 regarding instructions to learners on how to use the instructional materials to meet the learning objectives or competencies. The relationship between course objectives or competencies and learning activities is discussed in Specific Review Standard 5.1 as well.

Specific Review Standard 2.5

The learning objectives or competencies are suited to the level of the course.

Points: 3

Annotation for Specific Review Standard 2.5:

Expected content mastery is appropriate to the type and level of the course. Taxonomies that describe levels of learning can be helpful to reviewers in determining whether the objectives or competencies correspond to the level of the course.

For example, while the course may start with objectives or competencies that are lower in the cognitive realm, as the course proceeds they progress to a higher level that is suited to the level of the course (introductory, intermediate, or advanced) for that topic.

In addition to content-specific objectives or competencies, introductory courses may address core learning skills. Core learning skills, including critical thinking, information literacy, and technology skills, are typically those that transcend an individual course and are integrated across the curriculum. Core learning skills are sometimes called “core competencies.”

Reviewers, examine the course and module or unit learning objectives or competencies for the course as a whole to ensure they describe knowledge and skills that correspond to the course level.

It is important to note that lower-division courses will not exclusively include taxonomies from the lowest cognitive levels, and upper-division or graduate level courses will not exclusively use taxonomies from the highest cognitive levels. For example, a Speech 101 course might start with a lower-level learning objective like “Distinguish between a persuasive and informative speech” and progress to a higher-level one such as “Deliver a persuasive speech” within the same course.

Evaluating content mastery expectations may be difficult for reviewers whose expertise is not in the course discipline. Reviewers should apply professional judgment, experience, and their understanding of taxonomies of learning to determine if the stated learning objectives or competencies are suited to the course level. Reviewers with questions about the alignment of learning objectives or competencies with the level of the course should consult with the Subject Matter Expert on the review team.

General Standard 3 - Assessment and Measurement

Assessments are integral to the learning process and are designed to evaluate learner progress in achieving the stated learning objectives or mastering the competencies.

Overview Statement: Assessment is implemented in a manner that corresponds to the course learning objectives or competencies and not only allows the instructor a broad perspective on the learners’ mastery of content, but also allows learners to track their learning progress throughout the course.

Specific Review Standard 3.1

The assessments measure the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.

Points: 3

Annotation for Specific Review Standard 3.1:

Alignment: Course assessments (ways of confirming learner progress and mastery) are consistent with the course and module/unit-level learning objectives or competencies (2.1 and 2.2) by measuring the accomplishment of those objectives or competencies. Instructional materials (4.1), learning activities (5.1), and course tools (6.1) support the learning objectives or competencies and enable learners to be successful on the assessments.

From the types of assessments chosen, it is clear that learners can successfully complete the assessments if they have met the objectives or competencies stated in the course materials and learning activities.

Reviewers, examine both the course and module or unit objectives or competencies in your review of assessments. The review team is expected to review all assessments in the course. For example, reviewers should look at quiz and exam questions, discussion prompts, etc. Ensure that the assessments measure the learning objectives or competencies.

Examples of alignment between a learning objective or competency and an assessment:

1. An essay or discussion shows learners can “explain” or “describe” something.

2. A multiple-choice quiz verifies that learners can “define” or “identify” vocabulary.

3. An assignment shows that learners can “write” or “compose” a composition.

4. A video of a learner presentation in a foreign language shows that learners can “speak” or “translate” a foreign language.

5. Participation in a game reveals learners can “analyze” and “evaluate” complex factors and “make good decisions” that allow progress through the game.

Examples of lack of alignment between a learning objective or competency and an assessment:

1. The objective or competency is to “write a persuasive essay,” but the assessment is a multiple-choice test.

2. The objective or competency is to “create a body of work that illustrates your photographic vision,” but the assessment is a 25-page thesis about contemporary photographers.

Some assessments may be geared toward meeting outcomes other than those stated in the course; for example, a course may have a writing component as part of an institution-wide writing-across-the-curriculum requirement. In that case, the reviewer suggests including in the course the objectives or competencies that reflect the institution-wide requirement, if those objectives or competencies are not already included.

Special Situations: In some cases (check the Course Worksheet), the course objectives or competencies are institutionally mandated, and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. For such cases, consider the module/unit-level objectives or competencies to assess whether the course meets Specific Review Standard 3.1.

Competency-Based Courses: Learners have flexibility in preparing for

assessment of competencies, as they may have acquired competencies in a work environment or through life experience, independent study, etc.

Specific Review Standard 3.3

Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of learners’ work, and their connection to the course grading policy is clearly explained.

Points: 3

Annotation for Specific Review Standard 3.3:

Learners are provided with a clear and complete description of the criteria that will be used to evaluate their work in the course. Evaluation criteria are provided to learners prior to beginning a particular assessment. The description or statement of criteria provides learners with clear guidance on the instructor’s expectations and on the required components of coursework and participation. The criteria give learners the information they need to understand how a grade on an assignment or activity is calculated.

Reviewers, confirm that the criteria used to evaluate learners' performance are both specific and connected to the grading policy. Note, however, that you are not asked to look for and evaluate the instructor's specific feedback to learners in Specific Review Standard 3.3. Your focus is the design of the course, not the delivery of the course.

Examples of what to look for:

1. Evidence that the instructor has stated the evaluation criteria for all graded work. Criteria may be in the form of a detailed checklist, rubric, or other evaluation instrument.

2. A description of how learners' participation in discussions will be graded, including the number of required postings per week; the criteria for evaluating the originality and quality of learners' comments and their responsiveness to classmates' comments; and the grade or credit learners can expect for varying levels of performance.

3. Clearly stated point values for each question in quizzes and exams, including information about partial credit.

4. For group or team projects, an explanation of the criteria used to evaluate individual or team performance and whether scores or grades will be assigned by individual or by team.

Reviewers, determine that both conditions of the Specific Review Standard are met. If only one part of the Specific Review Standard is met, the Specific Review Standard is not met.

Competency-Based Courses: A description makes clear in specific terms the levels of mastery required to demonstrate the defined competencies.

Specific Review Standard 3.4

The assessments used are sequenced, varied, and suited to the level of the course.

Points: 2

Annotation for Specific Review Standard 3.4:

Multiple assessment strategies are used that require learners to apply what they learn and to think critically. In reviewing this Specific Review Standard, consider multiple factors, such as the

discipline, type, and level of the course, and consult the team Subject Matter Expert when needed. Look at the course as a whole to determine if the Specific Review Standard is met, since individual modules may not include sequenced or varied assessments.

The assessments are sequenced so as to promote the learning process and to build on previously mastered knowledge and skills gained in this course and prerequisite courses. Assessments are paced to give learners adequate time to achieve mastery and complete the work in a thoughtful manner.

Assessments are varied in order to provide multiple ways for learners to demonstrate progress and mastery, and to accommodate diverse learners. Examples of various assessment types include exams, essays, discussions, reflective journals, group projects, portfolios, written papers, presentations, multimedia projects, and interviews.

To determine whether the assessments are suited to the level of the course, refer to Specific Review Standard 2.5, as the cognitive level of an action verb used in a learning objective or competency is determined by the type of assessment that is aligned with it. “Choose,” for example, could be used in a learning objective or competency for a low-level or a high-level assessment. Assessments may reflect varying levels of cognitive engagement, but assessments in upper-level courses, for example, should include some assessments that are at the application level or above.

Examples of assessments that meet the Specific Review Standard:

1. A series of assessments progress from the definition of terms, to a short paper explaining the relationship between various theoretical constructs, to a term paper that includes the application of theoretical constructs and critical analysis of a journal article.

2. Assessments in a public speaking course include first submitting an outline of a speech and next a draft of the speech; and, finally, delivering the speech.

3. An upper-level course in world history has multiple-choice quizzes and discussions, and it also includes a term paper and final presentation that ask students to analyze and evaluate the various events leading up to World War II.

Examples of assessments that may not meet the Specific Review Standard:

1. The assessments consist of only multiple-choice tests.

2. In a course in which learners are assumed to not know how to find research materials, the first assessment requires learners to locate research materials, while library research skills and methods are not covered until later in the course.

3. No assessments are administered during the first 12 weeks of the semester, and an essay, term paper, and final exam are due during the 13th, 14th, and 15th weeks, respectively.

4. Assessments in an introductory course consist of only answering the questions at the conclusion of each textbook chapter.

5. Assessments in a graduate-level course include only lower-level assessments, such as multiple-choice, “knowledge-check” types of quizzes and short essays asking learners to define terms.

Circumstances affecting some graduate courses: The grade may be entirely based on a major assignment due at the end of the term. In this case, benchmarks for progress are provided during the term, with feedback from the instructor or peers.

Examples of benchmark assignments might include submission of:

1. An outline or project plan

2. A bibliography

3. A précis of the paper or project

4. One or more preliminary drafts

If any one of the three parts of Specific Review Standard 3.4 is not met, the Specific Review Standard should be marked “Not Met.”

Competency-Based Courses: Assessment of competencies may not follow the pattern of assessment in traditional courses. Reviewers, focus on whether the assessment instruments credibly establish that the learner has demonstrated mastery of the competency.

Specific Review Standard 3.5

The course provides learners with multiple opportunities to track their learning progress with timely feedback.

Points: 2

Annotation for Specific Review Standard 3.5:

Learning is more effective if learners receive frequent, substantive, and timely feedback. The feedback may come from the instructor directly, from assignments and assessments that have feedback built into them, or from other learners.

Look at the course schedule or list of due dates in conjunction with the turnaround time specified for feedback in order to determine if timely feedback is incorporated into the course design (refer to Specific Review Standard 5.3 for the instructor's plan for feedback). Look for examples of assignments that provide feedback automatically upon completion or allow for multiple attempts.

Examples that meet this Specific Review Standard:

1. Writing assignments that allow for the submission of a preliminary draft for instructor comment and suggestions for improvement

2. Self-mastery tests that include informative feedback with each answer choice

3. Interactive games and simulations that have feedback built in

4. Self-scoring practice quizzes

5. Practice written assignments that receive feedback, such as journals, reflection papers, or portfolios

6. Peer reviews and critiques

7. The opportunity for learners to compare their work to model papers or essays, sample answers, or answer keys prior to completing an assessment, thereby encouraging reflection and improvement

Examples that may not meet this Specific Review Standard:

1. Feedback on automatically scored or instructor-graded quizzes provides learners with a grade, but does not tell them which questions they got wrong, or provide any additional information that helps them track their learning.

2. A preliminary draft of a major paper is due, and three days later the final draft is due.

3. The learner receives credit for submitting a preliminary draft of an assignment, but no feedback on the draft is given.

4. Assignments (e.g., discussions, brief reflections) are graded as “complete” or “not complete,” and course information indicates that learners will get credit for participating in the assignment but will not receive feedback.