College or Unit Level Annual Assessment Report

College or Unit Name: **Graduate School**

Report Year: **2015-16**

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EMU's Mission and Expectation for Assessment
(https://www.emich.edu/assessment/)

Mission
EMU creates a culture of assessment through collaborative planning, systematic implementation, and rigorous analysis of collected data to make informed decisions that enhance opportunities for students to learn and to strengthen all curricular and co-curricular areas.

Expectation
EMU expects all curricular and co-curricular areas to generate and implement learning goals, collect relevant data, and use on-going assessment processes for continuous improvement.

Purpose of Unit Reports on Assessment of Student Learning
The nine units that report on assessment of student learning (see the list below), list their goals for the academic year, describe what goals were accomplished, and provide examples of how assessment data were used to enhance programs.

Note on Preparation for Preliminary Visit
EMU is preparing for a preliminary ("mock") Higher Learning Commission visit (scheduled for November 10, 2016); therefore, the information you provide may be useful to the HLC Planning Teams, particularly teams #3 (Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support) and #4 (Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Support).

For links to the assessment page for each of the following, go to
https://www.emich.edu/assessment/unitsaaessment.php

- College of Arts and Sciences
- College of Business
- College of Education
- College of Health and Human Services
- College of Technology
- General Education
- Graduate School
- Student Affairs & Student Services
- University Library

1. **Description of Council/Committee.** Describe how your assessment council or committee is organized and provide a list of the faculty and staff who directly contribute to it.

Wade Tornquist Associate Provost and Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies and Research and Anne L. Balazs, Assistant Vice President and Director, Graduate School are the two people responsible for the assessment of graduate programming. They work with the Deans, Department Heads, School Directors, Graduate Council, and Graduate Program Coordinators to insure the quality of EMU's graduate curriculum.

2. **Assessment Goals.** In addition to the primary goal of assessing student learning, list other 2015-16 unit goals that were to support assessment of student learning (note whether these are direct, indirect or operational).

1. Research EMU's graduate programs and collect descriptive data. (Direct)
2. Establish a protocol for reviewing assessment of graduate programs. (Operational)
3. Review, revise, and enforce graduate school policies. (Direct)
4. Improve research quality. (Indirect).

3. **Summary of Accomplishments.** Summarize the accomplishments your unit achieved during 2015-16 toward assessing student learning (the primary goal). Next, summarize the activities your unit engaged in during 2015-16 toward meeting other goals listed above.

Meetings were conducted with Department Heads, School Directors, and program coordinators on their assessment of program trends and outcomes. Requests were made for program reviews, accreditation reports, and program handbooks to evaluate status of EMU graduate education. Discussed most pressing resource needs. Served on University Assessment Committee to share efforts to improve program quality and prepare for HLC accreditation report and visit.

With respect to the goals listed above, we have:

1. Collected and tabulated both qualitative and quantitative data to familiarize ourselves with the 200+ graduate programs and their issues and needs. Hosted monthly graduate program coordinator meetings to share updates and information about admissions, enrollment, events, marketing, policies, recruitment, etc.
2. Created a template of questions to ask program coordinators about their accreditation, assessment, and student learning and professional outcomes. Met with CAS assessment committee as well as individual program directors from other colleges.
3. Reviewed and revised graduate school policies with input from Graduate Council to insure quality student outcomes. Sent statute of limitations' reminders to graduate students to increase completion rates. Worked with doctoral program coordinators to identify students whose statute of limitations may have expired and developed a communication plan to re-enroll them to complete their degrees. Granted graduate student petitions for extensions, prior degree credit and waivers in accordance with graduate school and university policies. Tracked numbers of requests for policy waivers and current approval rates, with an expectation that the numbers will decrease over time.
4. Sponsored the Graduate Student Research Conference and distributed awards for best papers. Provided statistical consultation services as well as writing, funding, and

presentation workshops. Tracked numbers of completed theses and dissertations by program and by semester. Promoted Connect Conference and ORDA workshops as well.

4. **Examples.** Provide 2-3 descriptive examples from your unit's activities that highlight how you assessed student learning, including "closing the loop."
    - The examples might be ones that indirectly influence student learning (e.g., reorganizing assessment councils, revising templates, etc.).
    - However, at least one of the examples should describe a direct measure or approach to assessing student learning (e.g., an individual program's example).

1. **Indirect measure**. As part of the Graduate School policy revision process, many changes were made to increase rigor and promote quality outcomes. Undergraduate courses (numbered 499 and below) are no longer permitted on graduate programs of study. Students may take these courses to meet deficiencies or pre-requisites, but they will not be honored as graduate coursework, cannot be used to meet graduate degree requirements, and will appear on an undergraduate transcript.

2. **Direct measure.** The policy regarding programs' statute of limitations was not enforced previously. Thus the three year, six year and seven year limits for certificates, Master's and doctoral degrees had expired for many students. Several measures were undertaken to remedy the situation including sending reminders to students whose statute of limitations has yet to expire ("nudge letters"), working with doctoral program coordinators to identify those students whose statute of limitations has expired or who have stopped out, and referrals to the online graduate petition portal to request extensions to the time to degree. In addition, we communicated the termination of two expired articulation agreements that provided generous graduate credit transfer opportunities for certain student cohorts. All of these measures have led to an increase in returning students, advising activity, and degree completion.

5. **Closing the Loop.** Discuss what your unit learned from the 2015-16 efforts of assessing student learning and how it will use the findings to improve the program(s), unit, and opportunities for students to learn. In other words, how will your unit use findings to "close the loop" and improve the program?

    Much effort was spent this year on familiarizing ourselves with the status of the Graduate School policies, procedures, and events. Every communication is an opportunity to improve quality, whether to set expectations about student behavior, research productivity, or policy enforcement. Learning about the details of each program will lead to more effective promotion and recruitment of students and the development of new programs that will be more cutting edge and in demand. One segment we have not interacted with are the employers of our graduates, who can give us more information on workplace needs and the preparation of our students. Industry contacts and Ph.D. programs at other institutions would be valuable connections to have as we attempt to successfully launch our students. The placement rates and employability of our students are indicators of closing the loop.

6. **Next Year's Goals.** As you turn toward the next academic year (2016-17), list and briefly describe goals that emerged from the current year and that you will focus on next year?

    The plan is to take stock of all accredited programs, which we know are actively engaged in assessment and to learn more about the assessment activity of those non-accredited

graduate programs. How are they monitoring student learning outcomes? By requesting program history, data, and updates the Graduate School can support program health and continuous improvement.

1. Review all current accreditation documentation.
2. Offer extensions to stopped-out graduate students who meet certain requirements and have a high probability of degree completion.
3. Continue communication efforts of Graduate School policies and goals, including graduate assistant allocation process for transparent and efficient operation.
4. Participate in the upcoming HLC visit and preparations.

7. **Provide Template used for Reporting.** Finally, please provide a copy of a representative template that you used for programs to report their assessment findings.

See attached.

Reference Literature: Role of Assessment of Student Learning in the Accreditation Process
In order for EMU to earn institutional accreditation, The Higher Learning Commission expects the university to meet five criteria (http://policy.ncahlc.org/Policies/criteria-for-accreditation.html), and Criterion 4 focuses on assessment of student learning:

> *Criterion Four. 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.

The Higher Learning Commission describes the value of assessing student learning as including the following:
"For student learning, a commitment to assessment would mean assessment at the program level that proceeds from clear goals, involves faculty at all points in the process, and analyzes the assessment results; it would also mean that the institution improves its programs or ancillary services or other operations on the basis of those analyses. Institutions committed to improvement review their programs regularly and seek external judgment, advice, or benchmarks in their assessments." (The Criteria for Accreditation: Guiding Values, http://www.ncahlc.org/Information-for-Institutions/guiding-values-new-criteria-for-accreditation.html.)

Graduate Program Profile

Date:

Program:

Coordinator:

Accreditation status:

New developments:

Program health: enrollment, graduates, community partners, employment outlook

Resources: leadership, faculty, staff, graduate assistantships, grants, equipment, building, professional network

Needs: financial, marketing, recruiting

Graduate School support available:

Outcomes/future plans: