

October 28, 2022

Re: Assessment of Student Learning at the Program Level

Dear Faculty Colleague,

As you may know, the College of Arts and Sciences is responsible for developing a system of evaluating student learning at the program level for degree programs. The CAS Assessment Committee (CASAC), a faculty-led group, has continued to work with faculty to do the following: (1) evaluate student learning at the program level; (2) document the findings, and (3) report how you used the information (or plan to use the information) to improve the program or enhance students' opportunities for learning.

We know you are very busy! Therefore, we have developed a step-by-step plan to guide you through the process of designing ways to better understand how well students are achieving goals of your program.

If you have questions, please contact your department head or school director; however, we will gladly assist you through the process also!

For more information about CASAC and EMU's accrediting body, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), please go to the appendix of this document (see pp. 4-6).

We look forward to working with you this year.

Sincerely,

Your Colleagues on CASAC

Faculty

Amanda Maher (co-chair), History and Philosophy, amaher4@emich.edu

Greg Plagens (co-chair), Political Science gplagen1@emich.edu

John Dunn, English jdunnjr@emich.edu

You Li, Communication, Media & Theatre Arts, yli23@emich.edu

Laura Pawuk, Music and Dance, lpawuk@emich.edu

Meriah Sage, Communication, Media & Theatre Arts, msage@emich.edu

Department Heads

Natalie Dove, Psychology, ndove@emich.edu

Mehmet Yaya, Economics, myaya@emich.edu

Associate Dean

Jim Egge, jegge@emich.edu

Programs Beginning Assessment Process (or Beginning Again)

If your program is beginning a process to evaluate student learning and to develop evidence of it—or if your program is *beginning again* (e.g., changes in faculty have led to another beginning), please do the following.

(1) Complete program information in the table below.

(2) Develop a list of 3-5 “student learning outcomes,” or main learning objectives. Consider: what are 3-5 broad areas you want students to learn and understand by the time the course concludes. Your program should be able to observe and analyze student work toward meeting these instructional goals and determine how well students met the objectives. In other words, select learning goals you can measure in some way.

For example:

- Students will be able to use [particular discipline-based] research methods to...
- Students will be able to effectively communicate...
- Students will be able to distinguish [key concepts, etc.]...

(3) Create a curriculum map. Now that your program has agreed on 3-5 learning outcomes or objectives, where will students be introduced and learn how to achieve those goals in your program’s courses? Map where students will be introduced to concepts or discipline-based practices, where students will engage with the concepts or practices in more detail, and where students will be expected to demonstrate the knowledge you expect. Find a template here [Curriculum Map](#)

Example: The English Education Program has two main courses where faculty evaluate students from a programmatic perspective. ENGL 408 is a key course where students learn about and practice approaches to writing instruction, and students are expected to demonstrate some expertise in all areas. For an example of another curriculum map, see appendix.

Brief Curriculum Map

| Research Methods | Effective Communication | Key Concepts |
|--|--|--|
| ENGL 408 – Introduced, Practice & Demonstrate | ENGL 408 – Introduced, Practice & Demonstrate | ENGL 408 – Introduced, Practice & Demonstrate |

Complete the table below and upload to the link below.

| | |
|--|--|
| Degree Program & Program Code | |
|--|--|

| | |
|--|--|
| Department | |
| Submitted by | |
| Email Address | |
| Program Learning Outcomes: Students will be able to... | |
| Curriculum Map* (for a sample curriculum map template go Curriculum Map) *For a definition of a curriculum map, see the appendix. (Note: You may upload the curriculum map as a separate document.) | |

Please submit parts to: https://irim.emich.edu/cas_assessment/logon.php

DUE: DECEMBER 2022 – January 2023

CASAC Response

The faculty serving on the CASAC will review and respond to your program’s assessment reports and plans—wherever you are in the process. The review is not evaluative. Rather, the purpose of the review and response is to provide constructive and supportive feedback. The process also provides members of CASAC an opportunity to review reports and plans and to observe how well programs have designed systematic ways of assessing student learning, including how findings are used to improve programs and opportunities for students to learn (i.e., how well programs “close the loop”). Each year, CASAC submits a report to the CAS Dean and the University Assessment Committee summarizing the college’s efforts in assessing student learning, and the Dean and UAC provide feedback for purposes of continuous improvement.

NOTES

The main purposes for constructing programmatic assessments of student learning are the following:

- To provide evidence from programmatic perspectives for how well students are learning—mainly, toward achieving the program’s learning outcomes;
- To enhance opportunities for students to learn and meet the learning outcomes;
- To gather and discuss information that helps programs to improve;
- To contribute to EMU’s efforts to retain accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission.

All degree programs (undergraduate and graduate) are expected by the Higher Learning Commission to systematically assess student learning outcomes. CASAC coordinates and supports faculty and administrator efforts toward this process.

Rev. September 28, 2022

Appendix

Brief History of CASAC

The CAS Assessment Committee (CASAC), a faculty-led group that originated in 2012, works to support faculty to build systematic ways of observing and documenting how we know students are meeting learning goals of our programs. Fifty to 75% of all CAS degree programs have contributed assessment reports over the years, and we are working to increase participation in all areas to demonstrate how faculty continuously improve learning opportunities for students.

Good News from EMU’s Accrediting Body: The Higher Learning Commission (HLC)

EMU is a respected university, in part, because it is accredited by the HLC. In its recent evaluation of EMU (Fall 2017), the HLC stated that we “Met” expectations for the criterion focused on student learning (Criterion 4B). In its response to EMU’s accreditation report (Fall 2017), the HLC recognized that college-level assessment committees have established assessment tools and processes, and stated, “it is apparent that faculty are engaged in using assessment data to improve learning.” (For more information about 4B, go to <https://www.hlcommission.org/Policies/criteria-and-core-components.html>.) For this, the CASAC again thanks all who actively participated in past assessment efforts.

HLC Critique – What EMU needs to do next, in terms of assessment of student learning. *The HLC did, however, identify one area of assessment needing improvement: documenting how curricular or process changes actually enhanced student learning.*

Specifically, the HLC has encouraged EMU (and the college) to be more intentional about documenting changes made to improve learning (as opposed to improving assessment processes), as well as documenting results from subsequent assessments that will inform the institution about the effectiveness of the changes made.

Getting Started or Continuing with the Cycle of Evaluating Student Progress

While we want to take the HLC’s advice and begin to examine specific areas needing improvement, we also recognize many programs are already accomplishing goals of assessing student learning and continually improving students’ opportunities for learning. Therefore, this year as you develop your assessment plans and routines we ask you to select one of three options --direct, indirect, or

custom-- that best identifies your current program assessment efforts and plan accordingly (see cover letter).

It is helpful to consider three key terms collectively and decide how to engage in and represent “closing the loop.” The following definitions of key terms are offered to guide our efforts.

Assessment: A term used to describe analysis of student performance (i.e., student created artifacts) in key areas of a course or program. Such assessments are not necessarily related to grades issued in a course; rather, they correspond to students’ acquisition of specific knowledge or skills expected by program instructors.

Closing-the-Loop: A term used to explain actions taken after assessing student performance in which recommendations for curricular improvements or changes are recommended and implemented. For instance, curricular improvements or changes may include sequencing of content, or the addition of, or modifications to, instructional practices, etc.

Curriculum Map: A curriculum map is a visual layout of the learning goals or outcomes expected of students and when, during their program, the students will be introduced to the goals, when they will practice, and demonstrate proficiency in them.

Effective Ways of “Closing the Loop” of the Assessment Cycle

The assessment of student learning loop gets “closed” in three main ways, particularly providing evidence for:

- Implemented curricular improvements;
- Improved processes of evaluating student work;
- Increased student learning based on curricular or process changes.

Note: Remember, the approach your program takes to observing and analyzing representative student work and developing evidence for how well students have met learning goals should be *humane* and *doable*. We know you are all very busy! Most likely, you and your colleagues are already engaged in observing how well students are doing in your programs. Now, *make those observations and evidence more visible*.

One more suggestion: As you and your colleagues are planning how to evaluate and provide evidence for student learning from a programmatic perspective, consider a two-three year cycle.

For example:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Year One (2020-21) Y1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Make list of learning goals;○ Create curriculum map;○ Pilot analysis of selected student work;○ Report on process and any changes you make;○ Submit a report to CASAC. |
|-------------------------------------|--|

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Year Two (2021-22)</p> <p>Y2</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Confirm list of learning goals; ○ Review accuracy of curriculum map; ○ Select representative student work and analyze it; ○ Consider and implement changes necessary to support or improve student learning; ○ Submit a report to CASAC. |
| <p>Year Three (2022-23)</p> <p>Y3</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Confirm list of learning goals; ○ Review accuracy of curriculum map; ○ Select representative student work and analyze it; ○ Evaluate Y2 changes or improvements to determine if they enhanced student learning; ○ Recommend additional changes to support or improve student learning; ○ Submit a report to CASAC. ○ Repeat this process for continuous improvement. |

NOTE: If appropriate for program outcomes and goals for students, you may combine programs under one assessment system and report.