SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES
ACADEMIC PROGRAM ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK
2021-2022

Contents

Introduction

The Mission of Southern California University of Health Sciences (SCU) is to educate students as competent, caring, and successful integrative healthcare practitioners. Thus, the University is committed to strengthening the quality of its academic programs and learning experience of its students. Each academic program at the University has its own Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) that contribute to the various components of the University Mission. Assessment is the process by which we learn how well the programs are meeting their Learning Outcomes.

Program Learning Outcomes are determined by each program though several have accreditors with influence over what the PLOs should include. Faculty members, as subject-matter experts, collectively set expectations for their disciplines and define the desired characteristics of graduates who successfully complete SCU programs. Through assessment activities, SCU generates data and results that are used to stimulate meaningful reflection and actions to improve the student learning experience.

Purpose of the SCU Academic Program Assessment Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to provide an overview of the SCU Assessment activities and create a single repository for information on assessment processes and expectations. It is thus expected to be used as a reference while completing assessment tasks.

Assessment Practice Framework

Assessment is just a formalized version of what faculty members naturally do: learn from what they did to improve what they will do. The prescribed assessment processes are about being systematic so that we can claim that our results are valid.

The process begins by asking what we want our students to know or be able to do at the end of the course or program. The answers to this question at the course-level are called Student Learning Outcomes. Those at the program-level are called Program Learning Outcomes.

Next, we must define our unit of measure, how we plan to collect it, and what we would consider to be an appropriate level of achievement. We call these the Metric, the Methodology, and the Target. Together, they demonstrate how well our students have achieved the Learning Outcomes.

A full Assessment Plan must also identify the person(s) responsible for data collection and the person(s) responsible for data analysis and interpretation. Program leadership should engage their faculty in discussions to interpret findings in relation to the targets. These discussions should include brainstorming on possible reasons for the findings as well as possible changes that could be made to address them. Program leadership can then determine which changes are feasible and approve their implementation. Implemented changes will be evaluated in future

assessment cycles.

Assessment and Learning Council

The Assessment and Learning Council (ALC) was established to:

1. Facilitate the assessment of student learning for pedagogical and curricular improvement.

2. Build a University-wide community of practice that will facilitate the adoption of best practices in teaching, learning, and assessment by all academic programs and departments.

3. Ask and answer "Are our students learning what we are attempting to teach them?" and "How do we know?"

The ALC holds bi-weekly working meetings where the representatives from each program learn from each other and University staff members from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) and the Center for Faculty Development and Excellence (CFDE) while they develop their assessment plans and reports. The ALC serves as the body that decides if an Assessment Plan or Assessment Report is sufficiently robust and complete.

Academic Program Assessment Planning and Reporting Calendar

Annual Program Debriefing with Faculty
Each program should take some time to reflect on the findings from the previous year as part of its annual program reflection and evaluation with faculty. They should have a discussion where they ask what the findings mean and what they should do about them. Programs also need to decide which PLOs they want to focus on in the upcoming cycle. It is suggested that the University requires that each program assess at least two PLOs per year on a rotating basis.

Assessment Plan Due Date
Plans for the following year are due on the ALC Teams site by August 31 of each year.

Assessment Report Due Date
Reports for the preceding year are due on September 30 of each year.

Feedback from ALC Due Date
The ALC will return its feedback to the programs by October 31 of each year.

Assessment Plan and Report Template

The following template should be used for both Assessment Plans and Assessment Reports. Just don't fill in the two rightmost columns when submitting a plan.

Program:_____   Plan submitted on:_____   Plan approved by ALC:_____   Report submitted on:_____   Report approved by ALC:_____

Program Learning Outcomes	Courses	Student Learning Outcomes	Metric	Methodology	Target	Person(s) Responsible For Data Collection	Person(s) Responsible For Data Analysis	Findings	Expected Use Of Findings
PLO 1									
PLO 2									
	Use these columns if using mapped courses		From your Metric Development Worksheet			Add to MDW for full Plan		Complete to turn a Plan into a Report	

Rubric for ALC to use when rating Assessment Plans and Assessment Reports

The following rubric has been created for the ALC to use when rating assessment plans and reports.
It has been implemented as a Microsoft Form at: https://forms.office.com/r/cWgCAXHUSf

Date of Rating:

Program Being Evaluated

Ayurveda

Chiropractic

Eastern Medicine

Health Sciences

Human Genomics

Medical Science

Physician Assistant

Other

Assessment Plan or Assessment Report?

Plan

Report

Program Learning Objectives--Describe observable and measurable performance on various skills and dispositions.

Exemplary--2 or more PLOs that are specific, observable, and measurable. Each objective is clearly linked to stated goals (and aligned with activities/deliverables) Written in future tense—as ongoing, desired end results for stakeholders. Connected to the mission(s) of the unit and division of which it is a part, and of the institution as a whole. Or, the PLOs have been dictated by an accreditor.

Proficient--2 PLOs that are specific, measurable, and observable. Connected to the mission(s) of the unit and division of which it is a part Language is well-suited to the aligned goal(s), but may be somewhat vague or need revision.

Developing--1 PLO, or PLO(s) not about student learning or not measurable.

Undeveloped--No measurable PLO stated.

Comments on Program Learning Outcomes

Assessment Metrics -- A variety of activities or assignments and methods (qualitative and quantitative; direct and indirect; formative and summative; diagnostic) is used to evaluate each intended goal and objective; provides clear information on the means of gathering data. Often discussed as "tools" or "instruments." Measures should provide valid and reliable data.

Exemplary--Both direct and indirect measures are used throughout, with an emphasis on direct measures. Multiple methods are used for some or all objectives. Described with ample detail (units may include supporting documentation, e.g., assignments, projects, or workshop descriptions & methods used to assess these activities, such as rubrics or surveys). Feasible – existing practices are used where possible. Clearly aligned with goals and objectives. Purposeful – it is clear how measures will be used for unit success.

Proficient--Direct measures are used across the unit's plan. Described with sufficient detail. Clearly aligned with goals and objectives. Feasibility or purpose of measures may need clarification.

Developing--No direct measures are used. Methods are identified for some, but not all, objectives. Some measures may not be clearly aligned with goals and objectives. Measures may need to be clarified.

Undeveloped--No measures of assessment are provided, or insufficient detail is provided.

Comments on Assessment Metrics

Benchmarks or Targets--Benchmarks are numerical reference points that are used for measuring or comparing current performance against standards that adopt best practices. Targets are projected figures based on previous results or existing standards.

Exemplary--Benchmarks and/or targets are identified for each assessment activity. Aligned with intended goals and objectives. Measurable and quantifiable (e.g., an increase of 5%) and represents a feasible/reasonable amount of success. Targets are based on previous results and/or existing standards.

Proficient--Benchmarks and/or targets are identified for all assessment activities. Aligned with intended goals and objectives. Measures may need clarification.

Developing--Benchmarks and/or targets are limited and/or not aligned with the activities. Language used to describe the benchmark is vague or subjective (e.g., "improve," "satisfactory"). No quantifiable targets, or where targets do exist they appear to have no connection with previous results and/or existing standards.

Undeveloped--No Benchmarks or targets are identified.

Comments on Benchmarks and/or Targets

Analysis/Results -- A complete, concise analysis and summary of the data/findings gathered from each given assessment measure.

Exemplary--Complete, concise, and well-organized. Evidence of appropriate data collection and analysis (e.g., charts, graphs, reflections, and descriptions). Address whether goals and objectives were met, partially met, or not met. Compares new findings to past trends, previous results and/or existing standards as appropriate. Includes anonymized supporting documentation, where necessary.

Proficient--Complete and organized Evidence of data collection/analysis. Addresses whether goals and objectives were met Addresses benchmarks/targets May contain too much information or stray slightly from the data set.

Developing--Incomplete or too much information. Not clearly aligned with goals and objectives Questionable/unclear or lack of conclusion about whether benchmarks/targets were met, partially met, or not met Questionable collection/analysis that is inattentive to the data as conclusions were drawn

Undeveloped--No analysis/results are provided.

Comments on Analysis/Results

Actions for Continuous Improvement -- Actions describe improvements to the program or assessment processes based on analysis of results. The assessment findings feature action plans for improvement, and the report is shared widely with stakeholders.

Exemplary--Identifies at least 2 actions in the improvement plan Addresses goals & demonstrates success Clearly describes how specific results will be used to modify objectives, activities, planning, resource allocation, work methods, assessment strategies, etc. and/or clearly identifies areas for monitoring, remediation, or enhancement; defines next steps, where applicable Includes clear timeframe for implementing actions/ determining follow-up Identifies a responsible person/group. Clearly describes how results will be shared with/distributed to stakeholders.

Proficient--Identifies at least 1 action in the improvement plan Describes with some detail how results will be used to modify objectives, activities, planning, resource allocation, work methods, assessment strategies, etc. and/or identifies areas for monitoring, remediation, or enhancement; provides some next steps, where applicable. Includes a timeframe.

Developing--Action plan is not clearly related to assessment results Doesn't address results appropriately and/or lacks next steps for systematic program improvement. Too general; not enough detail provided (e.g. timeframe, responsible person/group).

Undeveloped--No reflection or plan for the use of results is provided.

Comments on Actions for Continuous Improvement

Follow-up topics for future round-robin discussions at ALC meetings:

The ALC will return Assessment Plans and Reports to programs unless they achieve a status of proficient or exemplary in each of the five areas. If a plan or report cannot be fixed at the meeting where it is being rated, the program ALC representative and at least one member of OIE staff will meet to revise the plan or report so that it can be deemed to be proficient. If a plan or report fails a second time, the program director and the AVP of OIE will attend a second meeting with the program ALC representative and the original OIE staff member.

Procedure for Reporting Assessment Results and Program Responses

Programs report assessment results every three years as part of their Mid-Cycle Program Review Report. Programs should submit their last three (or as many as they have) final assessment reports with the ALC rubric results (obtainable from OIE) for each, along with written responses to the four questions below:

      A. Reflecting on up to three years of the assessment process, what have we learned about the process and what resources are needed to improve it? (WSCUC Criteria for Review 2.7, 4.1, 4.4, 4.6)

      B. To what extent have the results of assessment reports been used to improve teaching and learning? Administrative processes? (CFRs 2.7, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4)

      C. Reflecting on up to the past three years' assessment report rubric completed annually by the Assessment and Learning Council, to what extent did your department implement recommendations and continue commendations? (CFR 4.1)

      D. How well are your assessment efforts supported by the institution? How supportive has OIE been? CFDE? (CFRs 4.2-4.7)

Note that the instructions say that "programs should" and the first question asks, "what have we learned." Assessment is an activity best done by program faculty as a group. Programs are encouraged to involve all of their faculty in assessment activities—particularly in the making of meaning from assessment results. The six-year cycle is long enough to find something in year one, watch and see it again in year two, make a change in year three, and see if it had an effect in years fours, five, and six. Assessment done right is a long-term team activity undertaken by engaged and informed program faculty and administrators.

Appendix A: Assessment and Learning Council Charge

Assessment and Learning Council (ALC) Effective 9.1.2020

Mission:

1. Facilitate the assessment of student learning for pedagogical and curricular improvement.
2. Build a University-wide community of practice that will facilitate the adoption of best practices in teaching, learning, and assessment by all academic programs and departments.
3. Ask and answer "Are our students learning what we are attempting to teach them? How do we know?"

Membership:

1. Council Lead: AVP OIE
2. Staff Liaison: Director of Assessment, Institutional Research, and Reporting
3. Program and Department Liaisons: Each program and department will designate at least one liaison annually beginning September (Note: The Accelerated Science Division is exempt from appointing a liaison but may do so at the discretion of the director.)
4. Faculty Senate Liaison: The Faculty Senate may designate a liaison annually beginning September 1 at its discretion.

Duties of Staff Liaison:

1. Convene the Council on a regular basis.
2. Serve as subject matter expert on Assessment of Student Learning.
3. Prepare reports and presentations on behalf of Assessment and Learning Council to Academic Council, Faculty Senate, President's Cabinet, and Board of Regents as requested.

Duties of Program/Department Liaison:

1. Champion a culture of assessment within their department or program.
2. Develop expertise in academic assessment as it relates to their program or department.
3. Serve as primary liaison to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness on matters related to assessment and program review.

Committee Duties:

1. Understand and guide the institution and each program on ensuring compliance with WASC Senior Commission assessment related Standards and CFRs and with the Assessment Rubrics
2. Review and catalog institutional and programmatic assessment plans; recommend improvement
3. Advise faculty and programs on assessment and program review procedures and methods
4. Assist faculty and programs in interpreting assessment results
5. Review and archive institutional and program-level assessment reports
6. Review and implement policies and procedures for reporting assessment data
7. Recommend faculty development opportunities, training materials, and activities in support of student learning
8. Propose additions, deletions or changes to teaching methods and curriculum

Committee Member Benefits:

1.The University will send committee members to professional development opportunities such as the WASC educational programs as funding permits.

2. As determined by the Program Director, Dean, and/or Faculty Senate, faculty members may receive credit for participating in the Council.

Appendix B: Glossary

Assessment: A systematic process of inquiry through which we examine how well our units are functioning, and the extent to which our students are achieving intended learning outcomes.

Co-Curricular Activity: An activity sponsored by an academic program, or by the university itself which typically takes place outside of the traditional classroom and contributes meaningfully to the student learning experience but is generally not graded assignment within a course. Co-Curricular activities include volunteer opportunities, blood drives service learning, community service, student conclaves, professional advocacy events, research, leadership roles in student organizations.

Curriculum Map: A visual representation of the program indicating where program learning outcomes are met at heightening levels of application within courses.

Direct Assessment: A method of eliciting evidence of achievement relying upon direct scrutiny, observation or examination of performance by an observer.

Indirect Assessment: A method relying upon inference, such as surveys, interviews, and focus groups to gauge achievement.

Outcomes-Based Assessment: A purposefully planned process of inquiry that is designed to gauge success on a defined set of success criteria and to effect continuous improvement.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs): A concrete set of statements describing what each graduate of a program should know and be able to do upon successful completion of the program. Program Learning Outcomes also identify the habits of mind, or dispositions that our students should develop over time and embody, such as integrity, respect for others, and sense of professionalism.

Rubric: A scoring guide or grid that establishes performance criteria in qualitatively defined terms and clearly communicates expectations and standards.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs): Within each course, a set of learning outcomes is formulated which specifies what the students in a course should know and be able to do upon successful completion of the course.

University Learning Outcomes (ULOs): A common set of outcomes transcending programs specifying what all graduates of the university should know and be able to do upon graduation from the university.