



**Student Learning Outcome Assessment Plan:
Continuous Quality Improvement
Florida Atlantic University**

A Report to the
Team for Assurance of Student Learning
and the
Associate Provost for Assessment and Instruction

By the
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Student Learning Outcome Assessment at FAU: Continuous Quality Improvement

Program Purpose: Implement a coordinated, sustainable student learning outcomes assessment plan that efficiently provides meaningful information for program evaluation and revision and seamlessly articulates with departmental, College and University evaluation of student learning outcomes.

The American Association for Higher Education's 9 Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning provided a foundation for development of our assessment plan:

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values. Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve. Educational values should drive not only what we choose to assess but also how we do so. Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what's easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about.
2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time. As a reflection of this understanding, assessment should employ a diverse array of methods, including those that call for actual performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration.
3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes. Assessment is a goal-oriented process.
4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes and to the experiences that lead to those outcomes: the curricula, teaching, and kind of student effort that lead to particular outcomes.
5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic.
6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved. Faculty play an especially important role, but assessment is not a task for small groups of experts; its aim is attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.
7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates

questions that people really care about.

8. Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.
9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.

Assessment alone changes little. Its greatest contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and worked at. These principles of quality assessment were foundational to the development of this assessment plan.

Purpose of the Learning Outcomes Assessment /CQI Process

The FAU faculty is committed to ongoing assessment of outcomes throughout the University. The process that reflects this commitment is Continuous Quality Improvement or CQI. CQI is a philosophical approach to quality that contends most things can be improved. At its core, the philosophy of CQI is lived in the belief that improving the services we offer everyday better meets the needs of those we serve. This assessment process enables the university community to regularly review academic standards and relevant outcomes facilitating improvement of academic programs thus, the university's status.

Focusing on quality improvement rather than assessment alone is consistent with the strategic plan of Florida Atlantic University. One of the core concepts of CQI is that quality is defined as meeting or exceeding the expectations of those we serve. In the perspective of a state university we serve our students, employers, the community, and the State of Florida. Another core concept of CQI is that problems are usually found in processes, not persons; improvements can be made in outcomes by improving the processes, not changing the people who manage the flawed processes. Also consistent with the values of the university, a core concept of the CQI model is that incremental change can provide continual improvement in outcomes. Finally, continuous improvement is most effective when it becomes a valued component of daily work and not an added responsibility episodically or as an afterthought to a process. Instead, the CQI process should provide ongoing information to improve processes within each department. Further, the CQI process serves as a mechanism to strategically implement recommendations of the state and university's strategic plans enabling to advance the rank of FAU as a public research university.

The primary purposes of Learning Outcomes Assessment /CQI reviews are to provide systematic evidence of individual program, departmental, and College

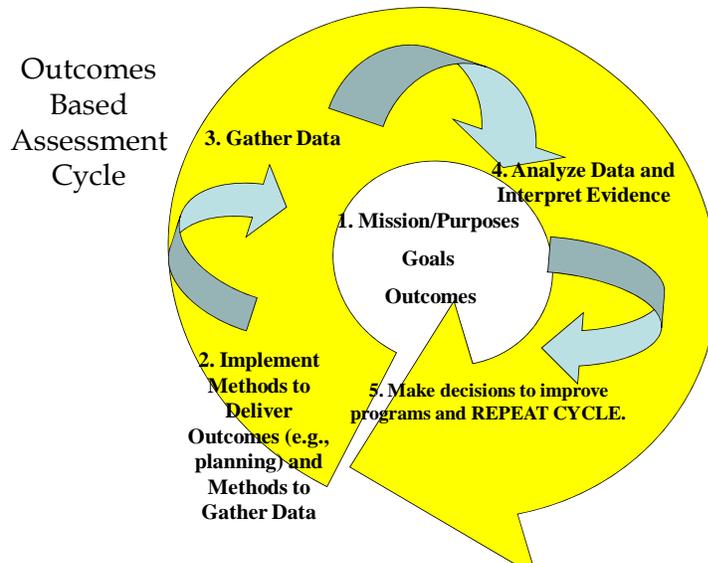
- a. Strengths
- b. Opportunities for improvement
- c. Contributions to institutional effectiveness
- d. National position with respect to comparable programs

The Learning Outcomes Assessment /CQI model serves as a motivating force for continuously improving rather than on reaching an end point of quality. In addition, this model is consistent with the University vision for enhancing our status as an academic leader.

Components of the Learning Outcomes Assessment /CQI Process

The Learning Outcomes Assessment /CQI process is believed to provide a seamless flow of student outcome information between programs, departments and colleges, and the University. A model of the relationship between these units is provided in Figure 1 (below). To achieve this information flow goal, the first step in the process is to define program, departmental and college level learning outcomes with descriptors and measures defined by the program faculty.

Subsequently, assessments at all levels can be shared using a common database. To support development of accurate assessment tools, persons involved in assessment are encouraged to refer to the FAU Assessment website which contains a variety of resources, including the rubrics for the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment and the specific rubrics for each of the three components of the Academic Learning Compacts.



The CQI Process at FAU

The foundational principle for the CQI process at FAU is that the process be formative to reflect the American Association for Higher Education principles; for this reason, the assessment cycle is an annual process. The annual report highlights data indicating a need for improvement, how and when the data were reviewed with the faculty and how it was acted upon, the resultant changes, and any evidence of the impact of such changes at the time of the annual report.

CQI activities are performed to measure the quality of student learning outcomes, identify patterns and trends in outcomes across the university, and celebrate success or hold programs and departments accountable for outcomes. The process is designed to actualize the University's commitment to improving outcomes by initiating assessment with those who best understand the outcome data: faculty in the individual programs. To honor this commitment, each unit provides an annual report for each student learning outcome. However, the process is intentionally designed to include time to analyze the data, identify issues, and develop an action plan before reporting forward. All program and department CQI reports are due annually on March 15 and provide a report of the data collected in the previous academic year and any resulting planned program improvements, including possible modifications of the assessment plan.

CQI Components

- Defining student learning outcomes and developing a written CQI plan that includes methods of data collection and criteria for achievement of those outcomes
- Ongoing data collection/analysis according to defined measures
- Using results to identify opportunities for improvement
 - Departmental work groups develop action plans for improvement, as indicated
 - Monitor action plans and the effectiveness of system improvements

The CQI plan and related procedures are reviewed annually for continued applicability. Revisions are made as indicated. This comprehensive review promotes an optimum CQI process.

Confidentiality

CQI reports contain only aggregate data. No person or identifying information shall be revealed in a public report. CQI forms (hard copy) shall be maintained in secured files and electronic data shall be maintained in accordance with University policy. Only authorized University personnel shall access QI data as necessary to conduct research, analyze data and produce aggregate reports.

Integrated Continuous Process

Program Level

Purpose: Program level faculty provide the foundation of assessment and quality improvement. Program faculty develop the CQI plan and review it annually noting in particular the fit of measures to outcomes. Program faculty are best suited to identify appropriate internal and external measures for relevant outcomes.

Process: A critical responsibility of the program faculty is to review and refine the data collection plan for the current academic year. The Program CQI Plan is modified as needed. In addition, faculty review progress on the previous year's action plan so that adjustments can be made if needed.

Assessment results are specifically used for program development at the program level. During the fall semester program faculty prepare a Program Outcomes CQI Report based upon analysis of data from the previous academic year. Using the template provided in the assessment database, the Program Outcomes CQI Report will demonstrate:

- Analysis of the data collected
 - Analyze data from completed semesters and/or completed academic year
 - Identify positive and negative trends as well as unanticipated outcomes
- Develop an action plan using evidence-based strategies where appropriate
- Report plan to College Assessment Committee
- Alter assessment plan as appropriate based on changes in action plan or suggestions of College or University committees.
- Provide timely reports when required or requested
 - First draft of the analysis and identified areas of concern is due to the College Assessment Committee on October 15th
 - Action plan is due to the College Assessment Committee on February 15th

College Level Process

Purpose: Each College will appoint an Assessment Committee annually. The Assessment Committee is accountable to develop an outcomes based CQI plan that bridges the program and departmental outcomes to the university outcomes, reflecting the unique contribution of the individual college. The plan will incorporate identified measures and an assessment timeline as well as responsible parties. The Assessment Committee will periodically review and modify the College Assessment Plan as needed.

Process: A major responsibility of the College Assessment Committees is to receive all college program and department assessments, review the same, and affirm the action plan or recommend alternative strategies where appropriate. A review summary is provided to the program for immediate internal feedback.

The Assessment Committee then summarizes the individual reports. Guided by the college outcomes, the Assessment Committee uses the aggregate to conduct the CQI assessment. A preliminary report of the College CQI assessment including individual program and departmental preliminary CQI reports is due to the Associate Provost for Assessment and Instruction by November 25th annually. The preliminary report provides a summary of the initial data analysis and areas of concern in the college-level data.

Building on the available evidence, the Assessment Committee develops an action plan to address the identified areas of concern for the college. The complete College CQI Annual Report, including an action plan, must be submitted to the Dean no later than March 15th. After

any revisions are completed, the Dean submits the College CQI Annual Report by March 31st to TASL for their review.

University Level Process

Purpose: The University Team for Assurance of Student Learning (TASL) is the university-level assessment committee comprised of the Associate Provost for Assessment and Instruction, College Assessment Directors, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and a representative from Institutional Effectiveness and Analysis. The purpose of TASL is to provide direction and supervise assessment of student learning outcomes. TASL members chair their respective College Assessment Committees and ensure compliance with university assessment directives at the college and department levels. They also advise the Associate Provost for Assessment and Instruction on university assessment policies and procedures.

Process: The committee receives and reviews individual college CQI reports, verifying the report, identifying additional opportunities for improvement, and suggesting additional strategies as needed. A summary of the review is provided to each individual college.

The TASL committee develops the CQI assessment plan for university level student learning outcomes and defines the measures for those outcomes. The TASL committee then analyzes the data to evaluate university level outcomes, identify patterns in the data, and develop action plans for any identified issues. The University CQI Report is submitted to the Provost and President by June 1 annually.

Summary

The CQI model of student learning outcomes assessment supports the goals and objectives of the Florida Atlantic University 2012-2017 Strategic Plan. The model reinforces all aspects of Goal 1: Enrich the Educational Experience. Specifically, Objectives 1, *Enhance the quality of undergraduate academic programs* and 4 *Support an organizational culture in which all units are dedicated to student success* are directly related to the purposes of the CQI learning outcomes assessment model. However, transitioning to a culture that moves beyond assessment alone to a culture that values continuous quality improvement takes time and careful attention to the process. The CQI model focuses assessment on use of the data to make informed, meaningful changes. Investment in the process at all levels is required.

A University is a complex system of varied but interrelated processes designed to serve a broad array of stakeholders. As higher education increasingly faces challenges like rising costs, diminishing resources, and higher expectations for service excellence and accountability, academic leaders search for ways to improve or even transform their institutions. Opportunities for process improvement abound on both the academic and administrative fronts.

Examples of academic processes long needing improvement include course development, curriculum revision, and advising. Bringing together new, fresh ideas from different perspectives and unique angles is the surest path to efficiency and effectiveness in a decentralized university environment. This is the essence of a continuous quality improvement CQI model of assessment.

CQI is an approach to quality management that focuses on processes rather than persons, recognizes both internal and external customers of our services and adheres to the value of objective data to analyze and subsequently improve processes. CQI and outcomes assessment are interrelated concepts. The data from outcomes assessment forms the basis for quality improvement. Outcome data guide the faculty in determining where to direct their attention in improving processes.

The uniqueness of the model is that all aspects of the assessment are managed at the academic unit level rather than from the top down. Faculty at the program level identify the most significant outcomes to monitor in student learning and the assessments best used to evaluate each. Ultimately, the CQI model of student learning outcomes assessment assists the FAU community to enhance existing programs, improve effectiveness in the teaching-learning process, foster a collaborative work environment, and tap the expertise of University faculty, staff, and students to expedite advancement of our mission and strategic plan. More importantly, however, a clear focus on continuous quality improvement in student learning outcomes at all levels of the university will result in graduates who are leaders well prepared to address the real-world issues in service to society.

Suggested Assessment Timeline

Fall Semester

- Oct 15: Units analyze data collected in the previous academic cycle and submit analysis and areas for improvement to the College Assessment Committee
- Nov 25: College Assessment Committee submits summary report of activity to TASL for review
- Dec 15: Response from TASL due to Colleges
Associate Provost prepares BOG report on assessment activity

Spring Semester

- Feb15: Units submit action plan to the College Assessment Committee for review
- March 15: Action plans are submitted to the college Deans
Units begin implementing plans for improvement
- March 31: Deans submit annual report to TASL
- June 1: TASL prepares annual university report for the Provost