

University System of Georgia
Regents Administrative Committee
Effectiveness and Accreditation

RACEA Assessment Survey

Task Force on Assessment Methods

April 2014

Introduction

The purpose of the RACEA Assessment Survey is to provide an overview of how academic assessment is conducted at the course, program, and institutional levels by the units that comprise the University System of Georgia, with emphasis placed on general education. At the institutional level, respondents were asked to provide examples of how assessment was used to improve student learning outcomes and how assessment is integrated into the comprehensive program review (CPR) and the strategic planning processes.

The survey was conducted online during the Fall Semester 2013 using Cvent Web Surveys. Twenty-three of thirty-one institutions responded to the survey for a response rate of 74 percent. A breakdown of respondents by sector is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Survey Respondent Summary

USG Sector	Number	# Responded	% Responded
Research Universities	4	3	75%
Comprehensive Universities	4	4	100%
State Universities	10	9	90%
State Colleges	13	7	54%
Totals	31	23	74%

General Education Assessment Practices

For the assessment practices of general education, the survey posed questions addressing the course and institutional levels. Throughout the survey, general education student learning outcomes (SLOs) were synonymous with college learning competencies (CLCs). Eleven institutions reported assessing SLOs/CLCs directly and nine other institutions reported assessing SLOs/CLCs both directly & indirectly. Seven institutions indicated that they intended to revise their list of SLOs/CLCs within the next academic year.

The topics addressed by assessment programs are presented in Table 2 for the twenty-three responding institutions. Note that all responding institutions assessed critical thinking and communication skills, while less than a third assessed a healthy lifestyle or aesthetic engagement.

Table 2: Topics Assessed

Topics Assessed	Percent	Number
Communication skills	100%	23
Critical thinking	100%	23
Quantitative literacy	87%	20
Discipline-based knowledge/competency	83%	19
Cultural literacy/engagement/awareness	78%	18
Scientific method	78%	18

Topics Assessed (Table 2 concluded)	Percent	Number
Problem solving	70%	16
Human relations	65%	15
Information literacy	57%	13
Civic engagement	52%	12
Diversity	48%	11
Ethical reasoning	39%	9
Healthy lifestyle	30%	7
Aesthetic engagement	22%	5

General Education Course Level Assessment

Twenty-one of the twenty-three responding institutions reported that they conduct general education assessment at the course level. Table 3 summarizes how often course level assessments are scheduled and Table 4 summarizes how often these assessments are reported. Both tables are presented below.

Table 3: Course Level Assessment Administration Schedules

Assessment Administration Schedule	Responses
Each semester in each course section	6
Each semester in selected course sections	6
Each academic year in selected course sections	4
Other :	5
Varies by course	
Each department has a schedule for their courses	
Two year cycles	
In select courses during select academic terms	
Nine outcomes over the course of three years in select courses	

Table 4: Course Level Assessment Reporting

Assessment Reporting Schedule	Responses
Annually	12
Following fall semester and spring semester	3
Following each semester	2
Other:	4
Bi-annually	
Each department follows their approved assessment plan	
Following semester when course participates in assessment process	
When completed	

General Education Institutional Assessment

Fourteen institutions conducted general education assessment at the institutional level. Six of these institutions use curriculum maps to track general education SLO/CLC development. Internal assessment methods are listed in Table 5 below. Course artifacts, embedded assessments, and capstone courses are the most frequently used methods of internal institutional assessment.

Table 5: Internal Institutional Assessment Methods

Internal Institutional Assessment Methods	Number
Course artifacts (writing samples, projects, presentations)	12
Embedded assessment	10
Capstone courses	8
Student portfolios	4
Institutional QEP Topic	4
Other – use primarily standardized tests at the institution	1

Four institutions use selected VALUE rubrics available through the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU). Of sixteen AACU VALUE rubrics available, the ten currently used by USG institutions are listed in Table 6 below.

Table 6: AACU VALUE Rubrics Used

AACU VALUE Rubrics	# Use
Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global	2
Intercultural knowledge and competence	2
Critical thinking	1
Global learning	1
Information literacy	1
Inquiry and analysis	1
Integrative and applied learning	1
Oral communication	1
Teamwork	1
Written communication	1

Ten institutions use external direct assessment instruments. These instruments and their frequency of use are listed in Table 7 below.

Table 7: External Assessments Used

External Direct Assessments	# Use
ETS (Educational Testing Service) Proficiency Profile	4
ACT—CAAP (Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency)	4
ACAT (Area Concentration Achievement Test)	3
America Chemical Society DUCK Exam	1
CLA (Collegiate Learning Assessment)	1
College BASE (Basic Academic Subjects Exam)	1
JMU Scientific Reasoning Test	1
TTU Critical Thinking Assessment Test (CAT)	1

Program Assessment

All responding USG institutions indicated that they conducted program outcomes assessment. Seven institutions conducted program level outcomes assessment directly, while twelve institutions conducted program level outcomes assessment both directly and indirectly. In addition, twelve institutions use curriculum maps to track program level SLO/CLC development. The frequency of program outcomes assessment is presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Program Assessment Administration Schedule

Assessment Administration Schedule	Responses
Annually	16
Periodically as part of comprehensive program review	3
Following fall semester and spring semester	2
Following each semester	1

Eight of the twenty-three responding institutions indicated that they used an assessment system that was provided by an outside vendor. Several institutions indicated that they used internally developed assessment systems. A small number of both large universities and small colleges use Weave Online or Compliance Assist as indicated in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Vendor-based Assessment Systems

Vendor	# Use
WEAVE Online	3
Compliance Assist	3
TK20	1
LiveText (single college)	1

Institutional Uses of Assessment Results

Three open-ended questions were posed at the end of the assessment survey that asked how assessment results are used to improve student learning and how assessment is integrated in the comprehensive program review and strategic planning processes. Each of the following sections provides examples drawn from institutional responses.

Improvement of Student Learning

Nineteen institutions responded to the query about how assessment was being used to improve student learning. Responses ranged from statements affirming "closing the loop" to detailed descriptions of assessment systems and examples of improvements in student learning. Presented below are some notable examples of improved student learning.

- Results of a standardized chemistry test were used to identify need to raise math requirements for specific 3000 level courses.
- Inability of Spanish majors exiting a baccalaureate program to speak or understand conversational Spanish well led to additional presentation assignments in upper division literature courses and a renewed emphasis on study abroad.
- American History I students were not achieving a 70% target goal in a course learning objective assessed by embedded test questions. A faculty development program on historiography was conducted which led to improved student scores.
- Students in a BS Civil Engineering Program were found to have an uneven mastery of uncertainty analysis, so the presentation of the concept was transferred from the lab to the classroom. This led to a significant improvement in student understanding.
- In one program, students were not achieving at the level faculty thought was appropriate for an upper-level class. They conducted a curriculum mapping exercise and determined that these outcomes needed to be addressed earlier in the curriculum and reinforced throughout the curriculum.

Comprehensive Program Review (CPR)

Sixteen institutions indicated that assessment results were incorporated in Comprehensive Program Review (CPR). Uses of assessment in comprehensive program review included the following:

- Assessment results are incorporated in Performance/Accomplishments section of the CPR
- Assessment results are used as CPR quality indicators and student success rates are used as productivity indicators.
- Annual assessment reporting is used to demonstrate continuous quality improvement
- Assessment results are used to inform Regents' Test policy, graduating student satisfaction surveys, and learning support initiatives.
- A CPR change was proposed that adds external review of the assessment process.
- 80% of programs are professionally accredited and require reporting of assessment results
- The College significantly revised the graduating student survey in 2008 to ascertain student perceptions regarding their general education outcomes, as well as those specific to individual disciplines and/or groups of areas of concentration. The instrument now administered to graduating seniors includes questions regarding general education learning outcomes, as well as those specific to the School in which a student is enrolled.
- CPR includes an evaluation of assessment practice for each degree program. Programs upload assessment plans and reports that are then made available to a team of faculty and administrators that provides feedback and suggestions for improvement. Programs are required to follow up on those recommendations one year after the review, reporting any progress they have made.

Strategic Planning

Sixteen institutions indicated that assessment results were incorporated in the strategic planning process. Uses of assessment in the strategic planning process included the following:

- Where assessment results point to institution-wide student learning needs, these needs are addressed at the institutional level through strategy planning. This is especially the case where there is a common student learning need across multiple divisions and programs that has an associated cost.
- Assessment of SLO's plays a role in strategic planning within each academic unit (through the CPR process). At the Institute level, results of exit surveys, alumni surveys, and national surveys (such as NSSE) orient decision makers toward areas in need of attention. For example, several initiatives have been launched to address the perceived student-faculty interaction gap on campus--including the First Year Reading Program and Think Big Living Learning Communities.
- Results from annual assessment of administrative areas, student support, educational support, and academic productivity are used to inform the strategic plan.
- The strategic plan incorporates the institution's Complete College Georgia (CCG) plan and tracks improvements in student learning through CCG metrics.
- Assessment data is used to analyze gaps in student learning and target planning to improve programs.
- Assessment data are incorporated in unit strategic planning through the CPR process.
- The entire university is involved in the same assessment cycle. Student learning assessment is an integral part of the strategic planning and achievement process.

Conclusion

In the current transition from enrollment-based to performance-based funding, Complete College Georgia has placed student success in sharp relief as the paramount institutional and system goal. Effective assessment programs are key tools guiding USG colleges and universities to improve educational outcomes. The responses to the RACEA Assessment Survey as outlined above point to a variety of approaches used to assess student learning and to integrate assessment results into the review and planning processes. The increasing recognition that the typical student's journey meanders through more than one institution, system, and even state shifts the focus from the institution to the student and provides the units of the USG with an incentive to collaborate and learn from each other about how to promote student success through the continuous improvement of their assessment systems.