

from Restructured Expectations: A Transitional Workbook

The Higher Learning Commission

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

April, 2003

The following excerpts, related to review of assessment activities in higher learning organizations, are from the North Central Association document which will, in large part, become the newly revised version (2003) of the Handbook for Accreditation. (Words in **bold** represent those criteria which the Lakeland College Assessment Committee used in reviewing assessment plans during spring 2003.)

Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching

The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

Core Component 3a The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

Examples of Evidence:

- The organization clearly differentiates its learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate programs by identifying the expected learning outcomes for each.
- Assessment of student learning provides evidence at multiple levels: course, program, and institutional.
- Assessment of student learning includes **direct** and **indirect measures** of student learning.
- Results obtained through assessment of student learning are **available to appropriate constituencies, including students themselves**.
- The organization integrates into its assessment of student learning the data reported for purposes of external accountability (e.g., graduation rates, passage rates on licensing exams, placement rates, transfer rates).
- The organization's assessment of student learning extends to all educational offerings, including credit and non-credit certificate programs.
- Faculty are involved in defining expected student learning outcomes and creating the strategies to determine whether those outcomes are achieved.
- Faculty and administrators routinely review the effectiveness and uses of the organization's program to assess student learning.

Core Component 3c The organization creates effective learning environments.

Examples of Evidence:

- Assessment results inform improvements in curriculum, pedagogy, instructional resources, and student services.

Core Component 3d The organization's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.

Examples of Evidence:

- The organization regularly assesses the effectiveness of its learning resources to support learning and teaching.

Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

The organization promotes a life of learning for its...students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

Core Component 4b The organization demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.

Examples of Evidence:

- The organization integrates general education into all of its undergraduate degree programs through curricular and experiential offerings intentionally created to develop the attitudes and skills requisite for a life of learning in a diverse society.
- The organization regularly reviews the relationship between its mission and values and the effectiveness of its general education.
- The organization assesses how effectively its graduate programs establish a knowledge base on which students develop depth of expertise.
- The organization demonstrates the linkages between curricular and co-curricular activities that support inquiry, practice, creativity, and social responsibility.
- Learning outcomes demonstrate that graduates have achieved breadth of **knowledge** and **skills** and the capacity to exercise intellectual inquiry.
- Learning outcomes demonstrate effective preparation for continued learning.

Core Component 4c The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.

Examples of Evidence:

- In keeping with its mission, learning goals and outcomes include skills and professional competence essential to a diverse workforce.
- Learning outcomes document that graduates have gained the skills and knowledge they need to function in diverse local, national, and global societies.

Appendix B Commission Statement on Assessment of Student Learning

... Assessment of student academic achievement is fundamental for all organizations that place student learning at the center of their educational endeavors.

Among the public's many expectations of higher education, the most basic is that student will learn, and in particular that they will learn what they need to know to attain personal success and fulfill their public responsibilities in the Twenty-first Century. The focus has moved from considering resources as primary evidence of the quality of education to expecting documentation of student learning. An organization's focus on achieved student learning is critical not only to promoting and improving effective curricular and co-curricular learning experiences and to providing evidence of the quality of educational experiences and programs, but also to enhancing the public's perception of the value of higher education.

The Commission appreciates that effective assessment can take a variety of forms and can involve a variety of processes. However, faculty members, with meaningful input from students and strong support from the administration and governing board, should have the fundamental role in developing and sustaining systematic assessment of student learning. Their assessment strategy should be informed by the organization's **mission** and include explicit public statements regarding the **knowledge, skills, and competencies** students should possess as a result of completing course and program requirements; it also should document the **values, attitudes, and**

behaviors faculty expect student to have developed. Moreover, while strong assessment should provide data that satisfy any externally mandated accountability requirements, its effectiveness in improving student learning relies on its **integration into the organization's processes for program review**, departmental and organization planning, and unit and organizational budgeting.

An organization's commitment to and capacity for effective assessment of student learning will figure more prominently than ever in the accreditation relationship established between the Commission and that organization. The Criteria for Accreditation, the Core Components, and the Examples of Evidence adopted by the Commission in 2003 forge important new links between assessment of student learning and accreditation. More than just an effective strategy for accountability or an effective management process for curriculum improvement, assessment of student achievement is essential for each higher learning organization that values its effect on the learning of its students. Therefore, an organization committed to understanding and improving the learning opportunities and environments it provides students will be able to document the relationship between assessment of and improvement in student learning.

Appendix C Commission Statement on General Education

Understanding and appreciating diverse cultures, mastering multiple modes of inquiry, effectively analyzing and communicating information, and recognizing the importance of creativity and values to the human spirit not only allow people to live richer lives but also are a foundation for most careers and for the informed exercise of local, national, and international citizenship. The Commission expects organizations of higher learning to address these important ends, and has embedded this expectation in its Criteria for Accreditation.

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Regardless of how a higher learning organization frames the general education necessary to fulfill its mission and goals, it clearly and publicly articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of the general education it provides for its students. It also shows its commitment to the centrality of general education by including an appropriate component of general education in all undergraduate programs of substantial length, whether they lead to certificates, diplomas, or degrees. Moreover, the organization's faculty exercises oversight for general education and, working with the administration, regularly assesses its effectiveness against the organization's stated goals for student learning.