

The Insight

Assessment is a vital component of effective instructional practice. Every curriculum design model incorporates assessment as integral to the teaching and learning process.

Implications

Our review team will expect that there has been systematic implementation of assessment since their last visit. It is not uncommon for teams to ask to see 3-5 years of data so they can evaluate whether planned improvements accomplished the desired results.

“Engagement includes specification of outcomes, determination of appropriate assessment methods, systematic collection of data according to the assessment plan, analysis of the learning results, planned enhancements to improve learning, and repetitions of the learning assessment cycle.”

What Does HLC Expect?

In Fall 2020, Ferris will host its next reaffirmation of accreditation visit. Several have asked what HLC will expect for assessment. Simply, a peer review team will expect these things:

1. Attention to areas identified in the last visit that suggested that organizational attention was needed (and assessment is one of those areas),
2. Systematic approaches to assessment (plans, timelines, cycles, analyses),
3. Use of data to craft interventions to help more students to be more successful in their learning achievements,
4. Engagement of faculty in the assessment process,
5. Documentation of assessment results, decisions, and improvements, and
6. A culture of commitment to continuous improvement vs. a compliance mindset

Assessment as a HLC expectation dates back to 1985; the university submitted its assessment plan by 1990. Here is one example of what the 2010-11 team had to say about the university’s learning assessment:

(3a.) “The TracDat system . . . further shows an inconsistent approach to assessment throughout the institution. For example, general education assessment includes clear measurable outcomes with associated assessment data, analysis, and documentation of curriculum planning (closing the loop). However, the individual programs had a wide degree of variability; some programs had nothing more than a few learner outcomes with no associated data, analysis or evidence of planning. The institution clearly needs to address this inconsistency in assessment across academic programs. . .” (Team Report, 2011)

The HLC Criteria are significantly revised since our 2010-11 visit. 4B specifically relates to assessment: “The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution’s processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.”

New Minimum Expectations specify that faculty participate substantially in . . . 4) analysis of data and appropriate action on assessment of student learning and program completion, and . . . Institutional data on assessment of student learning are accurate and address the full range of students who enroll.”