Assessment Policy

Statement of Intent

St. Cloud State University is committed to assessment at all levels. In accordance with the Higher Learning Commission's Criteria Four, Core Component B, St. Cloud State University is committed to continuous improvement:
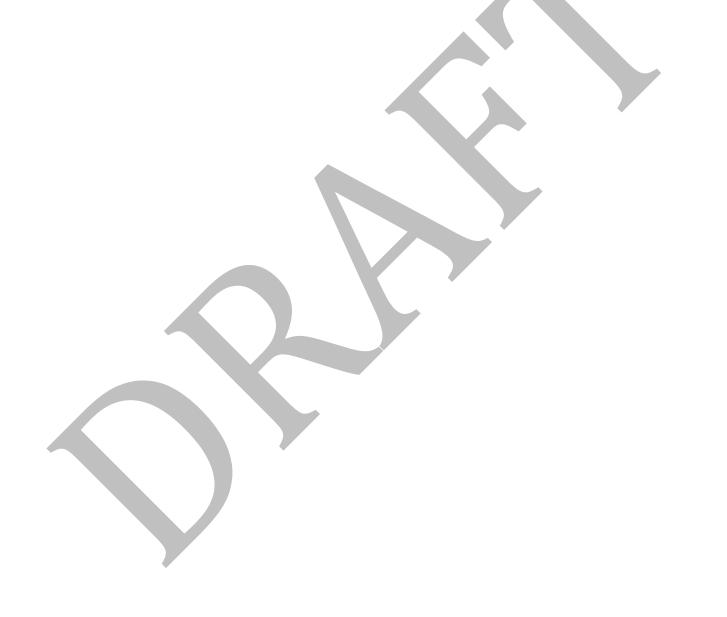
> 4.B. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.
> > 1.The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
> > 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.

This policy articulates that commitment, establishing the expectations, structure and principles that will:
- Underpin the University's assessment.
- Supports students' development and progressive demonstration of the institutional outcomes in the Husky Compact: Husky Compact (list)
- Inform the development of curriculum, both academic and co-curricular, and program quality and development.
- Be used as part of the documentation of personal and professional growth.
- Encompass program review and programmatic accreditation.

Assessment Policy

Application

This policy applies to: All coursework in programs offered at the university, assessment tasks at unit and program or course level, as well as, those administering and overseeing said assessment tasks.

Assessment Policy

Definitions

- **Accountability:** Use of results for program continuance/discontinuance; the public reporting of student program, or institutional data to justify decisions or policies; using results to determining funding.
- **Accreditation:** A certification awarded by an external, recognized organization, that the institution or program meets certain requirements overall, or in a particular discipline.
- **Assessment:** The systematic, ongoing collection, analysis and interpretation of evidence of student learning in order to improve that learning. Assessment occurs on many levels, such as the individual or student level, the course level, the program level, and the institutional level. Student learning includes the knowledge, skills, attitudes and personal development attained through curricular, co-curricular and out-of-class experiences.   Assessment work is defined as assessment activities that contribute to program-level assessment of student learning.
- **Authentic Assessment:** Determining the level of student knowledge/skill in a particular area by evaluating ability to perform a ↑real world↓ task in the way professionals in the field would perform it. Authentic assessment asks for a demonstration of the behavior the learning is intended to produce.
- **Closing the Loop:** Using assessment results for improvement or evolution.
- **Co-curricular Programs:** Out-of-class activities (e.g. student affairs programs and activities.) Curricular Programs: In-class activities.
- **Cohort:** A group of study subjects, selected based on predetermined criteria, which are followed over a period of time.
- **Criteria for Success:** The minimum requirements for a program to declare itself successful. Example: 70% of students score 3 or higher on a lab skills assessment.
- **Direct measures:** come from exams, papers, projects--essentially, any measure that is based upon direct evaluation of student work. Including, but not limited to:
  - Portfolios- a collection of papers, activities, projects, etc. that the student has developed and collected during a learning experience, course or program to show quality of learning and student academic achievement.
  - Evaluation by a Practicum Advisor- completed during the practicum, to alter, improve the experience, or to show student academic achievement.
  - Behavior Observation- observing student behavior during project, activity, or learning experience to determine student academic achievement.
  - Capstone Experiences- usually a senior seminar or final course or experience that integrates overall learning and student academic achievement from program.
  - Standardized Tests- a test given to students to determine level of competence, achievement, etc.
  - Pre/post Tests- a test given before and after the learning experience to determine levels of competence, student academic achievement, etc.

- o Oral Exams- an oral or verbal exam given during or at the end of a student learning experience used to show student academic achievement.
- **Expanded assessment work:** program assessment activities that are the responsibility of only some faculty members. It includes assessment scholarship, professional development, and service.
- **Goals:** General expectations. Effective goals are broadly stated, meaningful, achievable, and assessable.
- **Indirect measures:** provide indirect evidence of student learning, often based upon perceptions of what students learn, rather than direct evaluation of student work. Including, but not limited to:
  - o Exit Interviews: used to gather information and to show student academic achievement from students who have just completed a learning experience such as a course, a sequence of courses, a complete program, etc. Mostly used for program assessment.
  - o Focus Groups- meeting with students in small groups to determine level of competence, student academic achievement, student growth, etc.
  - o Survey of Students and/or Graduates- generally used to determine student➜s perceptions of the program, part of program, and overall quality and relevance of learning experience.
  - o Employer Survey- generally a survey sent to employers who hire graduates, asking about worker quality, competence, capabilities, etc. Usually does not show student academic achievement.
- **Outcomes:** These are the specific statements about what should occur as a result of the core functions your unit performs. The expected outcomes should be specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time bound (SMART).
- **Objectives:**
- **Programs:** include majors, minors, graduate programs, certificate programs, the Liberal Education program, and university-wide programs such as first-year experience, study abroad, or upper-division writing.
- **Program Review:** Periodic (5-year) evaluation of the effectiveness of a non-accredited educational degree program.
- **Standards:**
- **Standard assessment:** program assessment activities in which all program faculty members are expected to participate.
- **Tk20:** A comprehensive assessment planning and reporting system that offers comprehensive data collection at the course, program and institutional level, electronic portfolios, juried assessment, faculty qualifications, internship tracking, and accreditation reporting features.

Assessment Policy

Structure and Responsible Parties

St. Cloud State University has a university-level office of Assessment that is part of Academic Affairs. It includes a part-time faculty director, support staff, and a graduate assistant. The SCSU Assessment Steering Committee meets regularly during the school year. It is a university-wide committee that makes recommendations to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs for evaluating and improving student learning across the University through designing, implementing and monitoring a comprehensive assessment program at St. Cloud State University. Its responsibilities are to:

- Oversee the gathering, analyzing and reporting of data related to program and institutional outcomes; Facilitate and monitor assessment programs of the Liberal Education Program, undergraduate, graduate and co-curricular programs;
- Provide and promote professional development opportunities related to assessment techniques and best practices;
- Implement technology to coordinate, track and report on assessment;
- Document and report on assessment activities and learning outcomes achievement as required by the Higher Learning Commission, accrediting agencies and Minnesota State Colleges & Universities Board of Trustees.

Committee Membership consists of:

> Co-chairs:
> > One administrative co-chair (appointed by Provost):
> > One faculty co-chair: University Assessment Director (UAD)
> Faculty membership: One FA-elected member from each college and school (total: 10)
> College or School Assessment Coordinators (if different from above, e.g., professional staff)
> Learning Resources Assessment Coordinator
> Student representative: selected by Student Government
> Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Director
> Undergraduate Education Associate Vice President or appointed representative
> Graduate Studies Assessment Director/Grad Studies Dean or appointed representative
> Center for Continuing Studies Dean or appointed representative
> Student Life and Development Assessment Director or representative

The college, school and unit assessment committee structures are based upon the needs of their relative accrediting bodies and assessment reporting. Each unit makes public their structure on their website.

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Assessment Principles

Assessment work includes:

1) Defining or revising student learning outcomes for the program;
2) Developing or revising the plan for assessing these outcomes;
3) Gathering evidence (at the course or program level) about the degree to which students meet the outcomes and about factors that may promote or inhibit learning;
4) Synthesizing and disseminating this information to program faculty or staff members;
5) Discussing assessment findings and making decisions based upon these findings that are intended to improve student learning;
6) Implementing changes based upon these decisions;
7) Collecting follow-up information to see if the changes had the intended effect;
8) Writing reports to document the activities listed above; and
9) Participating in college-, unit-, and institution-level committees and workshops that have as their goal improvement of program-level assessment of student learning.

All program faculty members should participate in making decisions about the program's learning outcomes, its assessment plan, and changes to the program based upon assessment findings (activities 1, 2, and 5 above). If the program's assessment plan specifies that a course taught by a faculty member will supply information needed for program assessment (activities 3 and 7 above), the faculty member has a responsibility to provide this information. Likewise, if the faculty uses assessment findings to identify a needed change in the program that must be implemented in a course that a faculty member teaches, that faculty member has a responsibility to implement that change (activity 6 above).

Those that coordinate the work done by individual faculty members—planning and convening meetings, collecting and synthesizing data from diverse sources, disseminating findings, reporting in Tk20, monitoring progress, and ensuring that the program has the data it needs to make program improvement decisions and that the decisions it makes are implemented—are participating in expanded assessment. These responsibilities encompass activities 4, 8, and 9 above, as well as parts of activities 3, 6, and 7.

Article 22 of the collective bargaining agreement between the Inter-Faculty Association and MnSCU identifies five criteria for evaluation of faculty members:

1) Demonstrated ability to teach effectively and/or perform effectively in other current assignments
2) Scholarly or creative achievement or research
3) Evidence of continuing preparation and study
4) Contribution to student growth and development

5) Service to the university and community

IFO Evaluation Criterion	Standard Assessment Work (expected of all faculty members)	Expanded Assessment Work (not expected of all faculty members)
Criterion 1	Participation in program-level assessment activities (such as defining or improving assessment plans and making or implementing decisions based upon assessment findings)	Assessment work that is included in the assigned duties of a particular faculty member (such as assessment coordination for which the faculty member receives reassigned time)
Criterion 2		Projects supported by assessment grants or other assessment work that meets the scholarship standards set by a department
Criterion 3		Professional development activities that focus on program-level assessment
Criterion 4		Students benefit from an action taken by a faculty member to improve the program in a way suggested by assessment findings
Criterion 5		Coordination of assessment activities for the program (such as organizing and conducting meetings, collecting and analyzing data, synthesizing information, disseminating findings, reporting in Tk20, and monitoring progress); service on college or university assessment committees

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Assessment Planning and Reporting

A complete programmatic assessment plan as defined by University Assessment and the Assessment Steering Committee contains the following components:

1. Mission Statement
2. Learning Outcomes
3. Curriculum Map (defining which learning outcomes are taught in which courses)
4. Timeline (defining which outcomes will be assessed at what time or during a particular cycle)

Annual Assessment reporting will be made via the Tk20 System "Planning" tab. Results and analysis of data and other information can be entered at any time. . The annual faculty forum date in October will be used for unit and departmental assessment discussions. There is an expectation that information from the previous academic year will be updated by the third week of October. This includes projected changes based upon results as well as any resource requests. Programs are responsible for maintaining their information in the system

College/School/Unit outcomes, or their equivalent, should be entered by the appropriate Dean's or other administrative office. Current and future academic programs will be responsible for connecting (or "mapping") their programmatic outcomes to those of their unit. Thus, unit-level information will also be aggregated via the Tk20 system, assuming appropriate mapping has occurred.

Assessment of Liberal Education and Our Husky Compact will be defined at a later date, but it is assumed that they will be integrated into Tk20 as well as mapped to courses and programs, allowing consistent aggregation of information for the continuous improvement of those programs. Current and future academic programs will be responsible for mapping within Tk20 to both institutional programs.

An annual institutional assessment report will be prepared by the Faculty Fellow for Assessment and the Associate Vice President for Assessment and Accreditation. The previous year's annual report will be turned in to the Vice President for Academic Affairs by June 30th.

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Assessment Timeline

Action	Timeframe
All Academic and Co-curricular programs will have clearly stated Student Learning Outcomes.	End of Fall Semester 2014.
All outcomes will be articulated upward to School College or Unit and to SCSU's Institutional Learning Outcomes (Our Husky Compact).	Mid Spring Semester 2015.
Outcomes connected downward to Courses and/or programs.	End of Spring Semester 2015.
All Outcomes will be entered into TK20.	End of Spring Semester 2015.
Annual Institutional Assessment Report, including meta-assessment	June 30, 2015
All programs will have an Assessment Plan with details regarding when and how SLOs will be assessed. This will be entered into the TK20 Matrix.	Fall Semester 2015.
Closing the loop: Assessments will be administered by the end of Spring Semester with an approximate timeline for closing the loop, data gathering techniques, when results will be discussed, reports completed in TK20 template, when action items will be prioritized for change and continuation, and an implementation timeline for those changes, if any.	3rd week of September
Possible inaugural assessment day	During Fall Break (first time: 2015).
Action Items that need implementation or budget at a higher level will be taken to Dean/Unit directors through DACs or other forums.	October 15 (first time: 2015).