

Guidelines for the Implementation of Campus-based Assessment of the Major

SUNY Master Plan 2003-2008

I. General

Each campus is responsible for overseeing the process through which the assessment of academic major programs takes place, following existing curriculum and governance procedures. Campuses and programs have maximum autonomy in the development of assessment plans for academic majors, and should include the input of faculty, professional staff, and students.

II. Guide for the Evaluation of Undergraduate Academic Programs

Guide for the Evaluation of Undergraduate Academic Programs

It is important to note that the assessment of student learning outcomes comprises only a part of the comprehensive program review process academic programs should undergo on a regular basis in order to stay current and provide the best possible education to their majors. The recently revised Guide for the Evaluation of Undergraduate Academic Programs¹ is a helpful working document accepted by the faculty for guiding program review and the Provost's Advisory Task Force on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes recommends that the assessment of student learning outcomes in the Major be carried out within the broader framework of the University Faculty Senate's guidelines.

III. Requirements

All programs should meet the following requirements in carrying out their assessment plan:

- Programs should complete one cycle of assessment every five to seven years. If a review of the major has not been done within the past decade, it should occur early in this cycle;
- Programs should include measures of student learning outcomes in their plans;
- Programs should seek review of their final assessment report by an external review team, including a campus visit and report to the chief academic officer;² and,
- Programs should include in their plans some strategy for measuring change in students' knowledge and skills over time, specific to designated learning outcomes.

IV. External Review Team and Report

The purpose of the external review is to provide programs and academic leadership with an at-arm's length, objective critique of the strengths and weaknesses of campus programs, so as to provide the basis for improvement. While issues related to funding levels may have some relevance, the focus of the review should be on the academic enterprise and on steps that could and should be taken to improve the program within available funding levels. Also, given the importance of good governance, it would not be inappropriate for the external review team to examine the effectiveness of program leadership and the level of functional collegiality within the department.

Many programs are reviewed regularly for reaccreditation purposes by an external review team whose membership is determined by a professional accrediting body. The membership of external review teams for all other programs should be discussed between the program/department being reviewed, the dean (where applicable) and the campus chief academic officer or his/her delegate. The campus chief academic officer should make the final determination.

In general, external review teams should consist of not less than two (2) persons¹ who have no academic, professional or other significant relationship to full-time faculty in the program/department², no previous significant or formal affiliation with the institution, and

who come from academic or professional institutions belonging to a peer or aspirational peer group (equivalent to being in the same Carnegie class and having similar program size, scope and statistical, or perceived reputational, ranking).

The report from the external review team should include:

- The date of the campus visit and a list of the people whom the team met during the visit;
- The team's assessment of the program, including major strengths and weaknesses; and
- The team's recommendations to the chief academic officer for program improvement.

V. Reporting Requirements

By June 1 of each year, chief academic officers should submit to the Office of the Provost:

- A list of the academic programs reviewed during the previous year;
- For each program that was reviewed:

Ø The departmental or program Self-Study document, which should include the Program Data Summary Table (attached).

- Ø The completed Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in the Major Summary Report; and
- Ø The report of the external review team;

· A list of the programs scheduled for review during the next academic year.

VI. Additional Information and Recommendations

Please consult the Report of the Provost's Advisory Task Force on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (pp. 32-36, printed version) for additional information and recommendations regarding the assessment process for the major.