

The logo for Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) is displayed in large, bold, yellow capital letters. Below the logo, the words "VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY" are written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, spaced out across the width of the logo.

# WCU

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

# WEAVE

A Quality Enhancement Guide  
for  
Academic Programs  
and  
Administrative and Educational Support Units

**April 2002**

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# Introduction

This guide is a workbook designed to take you through the quality enhancement planning steps that all Virginia Commonwealth University programs and services will use. This institution-wide effort will allow us to document our effectiveness and show our commitment to ongoing improvement. It is important both to promote our accomplishments and to be accountable to our many publics.

In this guide, you will find the elements of quality enhancement planning for:

- academic programs — those involved in degrees or support of degree programs at the bachelor's, master's, doctoral and first-professional levels, as well as those awarding certificates at the post-baccalaureate and post-master levels.
- administrative and educational support units.

Assessment is a way we can document our effectiveness. A systematic, ongoing cycle of setting goals, measuring attainment of those goals, and using the results to make informed decisions is crucial to continuous improvement. Good assessment can promote quality enhancement at all levels of the university by providing us with the necessary evidence to guide effective decision making in many areas — programmatic changes, classroom teaching modifications, support service adjustments, policy or procedure revisions, campus climate improvements, and structural reorganizations. Simply put, we need to know how we are doing before we can do better.

In addition to these internal purposes, we will use assessment to respond to external requests for accountability. Assessment findings and use of results are of major importance to the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), and to external accrediting bodies for many VCU academic programs and services. We also want and need to assure students, parents, legislators and other stakeholders of the university's effectiveness.

Thinking in these terms, it is easy to understand the three key purposes of assessment:

- **To improve** – This evaluation is formative. Assessment activities provide a feedback loop to help shape or form better programs and services.
- **To inform** – Assessment activities can show a clearer picture of what is really happening in a program or unit and can inform others of contributions the program or unit makes.

- **To prove** – This evaluation is summative. Assessment activities provide evidence to sum up what a program or unit is accomplishing and providing in a way that can be persuasive to students, faculty, staff and the larger community.

## Assessment

So what exactly is assessment? Here is a working definition, followed by a set of questions that you can use as a checklist when you are thinking through the quality enhancement process:

**Assessment is a systematic process of gathering and interpreting information to discover if a program is meeting established objectives and then of using that information to enhance the program.**

A good assessment process can answer three related questions:

- What are we trying to do?
- How well are we doing it?
- How are we using what we discover to improve what we will do in the future?

For an academic program, student learning outcomes assessment will determine whether your program is helping students achieve intended outcomes in the major or in general education. Although the emphasis used to be on teaching in ways instructors thought best for students, the emphasis is now on learning — on what those students know and can do after they complete your academic program.

Let us be very clear about assessment as a form of evaluation: student outcomes assessment is not an evaluation of individual students or of individual faculty or staff; rather, it is a process that provides your academic program, department, school/college or related administrative unit with valuable feedback about overall performance related to curriculum, learning success, and/or services and goals.

If you are responsible for an administrative or educational support unit, your assessment focus is on showing how the purpose or mission of the university is being accomplished through your unit. While the emphasis used to be on performing that work in ways you thought best, the emphasis is now on the benefits or results of the learning or service provided — on the outcomes that are experienced by those you serve. Are the needs of those you serve being met efficiently and effectively? Is VCU's mission being accomplished through the work you do?

## SACS

The concept of quality enhancement is at the heart of the SACS philosophy of accreditation. SACS expects each institution to engage in an ongoing program of improvement, to demonstrate how well it fulfills its stated mission, and to document quality and effectiveness. The following core requirement and comprehensive standard from the new Principles of Accreditation spell out the details of SACS' expectations and can be found on the Web: [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).

### Section II Core Requirement 5

*The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services that (a) results in continuing improvement and (b) demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission.*

### Section III Comprehensive Standard 16

*The institution identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results.*

## SCHEV

SCHEV also is committed to providing meaningful information on the academic quality and operational efficiency of Virginia's public institutions of higher education. Through SCHEV's required reporting, such as the Reports of Institutional Effectiveness (ROIE), the dialog for accountability asks not only whether programs are effective, but also why programs and services are effective and what can be done to make them more so.

As part of the ROIE, each institution must report on student attainment of general education competencies in six areas: written communication and technology (2002), quantitative analysis (2003), scientific literacy note (2004) and oral communication and critical thinking (2005).

## Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning

Given the importance of assessment in planning for academic quality enhancement, the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) asked key higher education leaders to develop guidance for good practice in assessing student learning. The Nine Principles of Good Practice were developed. Many of these principles are quite useful for assessment of administrative and support areas as well. The principles recognize that our work is complex and meaningful.

As you work on quality enhancement planning, think about how your plan puts the following nine principles into action:

- The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.
- Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.
- Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.
- Assessment is a goal-oriented process.
- Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.
- Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic.
- Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative.
- Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.
- Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.
- Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.

For the complete Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning, see Appendix A, page 12.

# VCU's Model for Assessment and Quality Enhancement

## WEAVE

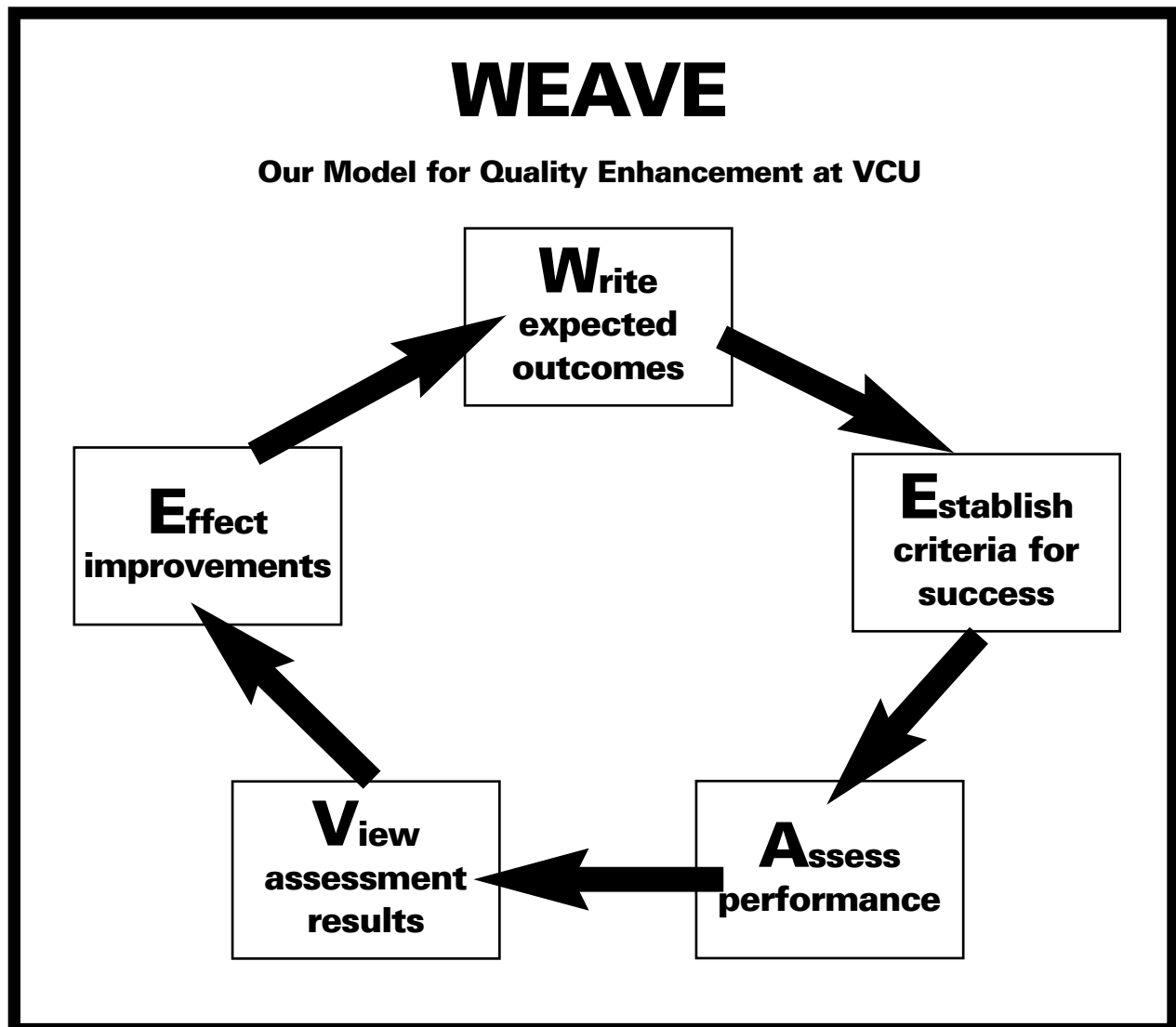
Discussions with faculty, deans and program directors tell us that most units are already doing some assessment of their programs. We now are establishing a shared framework for the ongoing assessment efforts and ensuring that all units participate in the process.

Our goal is to weave the various strands of planning, program review, assessment and evaluation into a tapestry that truly tells the story of our university — a tapestry that integrates these various strands in a seamless institution-wide vision. This tapestry will demonstrate the many ways VCU effectively accomplishes its mission and will show our process for continuing improvement.

You are part of a much larger effort; every unit within the university is involved in this implementation and assessment of institutional effectiveness as VCU works to:

- write expected outcomes.
- establish criteria for success.
- assess performance.
- view assessment results.
- effect improvements.

The WEAVE cycle begins when you articulate goals and objectives. Once you establish those expected outcomes for your program, you determine how to measure how well those goals and objectives are being met. Next you conduct the assessment activities and determine results. Then you and others in your program (or administrative and educational support unit) review the results and determine any actions to be taken, including any changes you will make to improve learning or services.



# WEAVE Quality Enhancement for Academic Programs

When developing and implementing outcomes assessment strategies for an academic program, you should keep in mind three purposes: to improve, to inform and to prove. You need to design an assessment process that provides information you can use to determine whether intended outcomes are being achieved and how programs can be improved.

## Write Expected Outcomes

### Step 1: Articulate the mission or purpose of your academic program.

Your program's mission statement or statement of purpose links the program or department to your college or school and ultimately to the overall mission of VCU. In formulating or revising a purpose or mission statement that is integrated into the university's mission, review the university's mission and identify how your academic program supports VCU's mission.

### Step 2: Define educational and programmatic goals and objectives, including desired student learning outcomes.

If any single step is the key for assessment planning, this is it. You will assess student learning relative to the educational goals and objectives you agree upon and establish for your program or department.

**A goal is a general statement about the aims or purposes of education in your program.** Goals are long-range outcomes that are written in broad, sometimes vague language.

**An objective is a specific statement that describes a desired learning outcome for your program.** This concept of a learning outcome seems to be the most difficult type of objective for people to understand, but it is really quite straightforward. Peter Ewell, a well-known national assessment researcher, puts it this way:

"A student learning outcome ... is ... defined in terms of the particular levels of knowledge, skills and abilities that a student has attained at the end (or as a result) of his or her engagement in a particular set of collegiate experiences."

**You might choose the following objectives to assess:**

- **Knowledge outcomes:**
  - major or discipline content
  - modes of inquiry
- **General education outcomes:**
  - oral and written communications
  - critical thinking and problem solving
  - library and computer use
  - quantitative and scientific literacy

- **Skills outcomes:**

- those required for effective practice in the discipline or in future employment
- ability to work with others
- listening skills
- teamwork or leadership

- **Attitudes and values**

- personal
- social
- ethical
- related to diversity

- **Behavioral outcomes** (most of these are outcomes that are important to your program but do not give direct evidence of student learning):

- current students
  - persistence and choice of major
  - course selection and completion
- former students
  - employment information
  - graduate school or other further education
  - professional activities
  - community contributions
  - evaluation of satisfaction with the program's preparation

## Establish Criteria for Success

### Step 3: Identify and describe appropriate assessment instruments or methods.

After you have identified goals and objectives, decide on appropriate assessment approaches. What sources of evidence could you gather that would convince you (and others!) that your students are reaching the desired learning objectives?

Remember the nine principles: comprehensive assessment strategies frequently require the use of more than one assessment to determine program effectiveness. Before you feel overwhelmed, here are a couple of points to keep in mind:

- Stagger assessments – not every assessment has to be conducted every semester or every year. They can be done on a biennial or triennial basis, if appropriate.
- Course grades – while a source of information about individual student achievement, these do not usually provide information about overall programmatic outcomes.

Here are some examples of assessment approaches:

**Direct Indicators of Learning** – students demonstrate what they know or can do

- assessments in a capstone course that gauge students' total learning
- course-embedded assessments
- tests and examinations (locally or commercially produced) – be careful since what is tested needs to match well with your desired learning outcomes
- portfolios of work over time
- pre-test/post-test comparisons
- exhibitions
- clinical evaluations
- products such as papers or oral presentations
- videotaped or audiotaped performances or simulations
- observations of students in case studies or other problem-solving situations

**Indirect Indicators of Learning** – students or others report on student learning

- supported opinions of external reviewers
- surveying and exit interviewing of students
- surveying of alumni
- surveying of employers (about learning demonstrated on the job)
- analysis of curriculum and syllabi
- success of students in graduate school
- success in careers or employment

#### **Step 4: Establish criteria for learning success.**

It is important to know what level of achievement will tell you that your program helps students achieve learning success. Here are only a few examples; think of what is important to you:

- 70 percent of students can solve a complex, real-world problem using skills developed in your program.
- A panel of experts rates highly the performance of students on their oral presentations in a capstone course.
- 75 percent of students can take reference materials and write an acceptable speech for a town council.
- The program advisory group reports that graduates have appropriate entry-level skills.
- 80 percent of students can pass your professional licensure exam on the first attempt.
- Panels of reviewers confirm that student portfolios reflect progressive development of critical thinking skills over time in your program.
- 95 percent of students and employers of graduates indicate satisfaction with your program.
- Interviews with graduating seniors indicate that students are overwhelmingly pleased with your program, but desire more internship possibilities.

## **Assess Performance of Students**

### **Step 5: Conduct assessment activities.**

Put your plan into action. Conducting assessment activities could include having a panel read a set of papers, taking a sample of oral presentations and reviewing the videotapes, or conducting a focus group with seniors. This time is marvelous to see what students can do, find out what they think and look more closely at your curriculum.

Think through developing the tools you will need. For example, a scoring rubric may be useful. See Appendix B for an example of a scoring rubric for oral communication.

If you plan assessments so that they are comparable over time and the sample sizes are adequate, you can gather valuable feedback on your program's effectiveness.

## **View Assessment Results**

### **Step 6: Analyze the findings from your assessments.**

What are the implications of the findings? How did students do compared to your expectations? What program changes could you make to improve student knowledge and skills that did not reach criterion success levels? What can you infer from the data? What future actions should your program take?

As you discuss the assessment results and their implications with others in your program, remember to celebrate what the program has accomplished in relation to what it hoped to accomplish. Are students achieving expected outcomes? This time also is for you to revisit and improve your assessment measures.

Remember to document assessment findings. Summarize the results for reporting purposes, but be sure to retain details of documentation in your own files so that you can review performance, and progress, over time.

## **Effect Improvements to Increase Learning**

### **Step 7: Implement changes to enhance quality.**

The results of this process should not sit on your shelf. To avoid having done a hollow exercise, you must "close the loop." If you have moved through the steps of this model, you will have evidence in hand that is important to you; use it to make improvements in your academic program in order to improve student learning. How can you help students develop the outcomes you wish to see? Perhaps you need to add or modify learning opportunities, give more chances for students to develop their skills in certain areas, or improve advising so that students take courses in a sequence that helps them develop key skills.

Also review your assessment plan. Is it time to make changes in your goals and objectives? Are your assessment methods giving you the quantity and quality of information you need?

# WEAVE Quality Enhancement for Administrative and Educational Support Units

SACS uses the term “Administrative and Educational Support Units” for a wide range of programs and activities that do not award degrees. At a complex university like VCU, these units have many different missions and serve very different people. Even so, it is possible to work through the WEAVE process to develop appropriate assessment approaches for any unit. While you are WEAVEing, consider how you can integrate any relevant professional standards, criteria, etc., into your thinking.

## Write Expected Outcomes

### Step 1: Articulate the mission or purpose of your unit.

Your unit’s mission statement or statement of purpose links the functions of your unit to the overall mission of VCU. In formulating or revising a purpose or mission statement that is integrated into the university’s mission, you should review the university’s mission and identify how your unit supports VCU’s mission.

Here are a few questions for you to consider in formulating the purpose or mission of your unit:

- What is primary function of your unit?
- What core activities are involved?
- What should those you serve experience after interacting with your unit?

### Step 2: Define your unit’s objectives.

Here are three categories of objectives:

- **Outcome statements** concern gains you want those you serve to make — for example, what can someone do after interacting with your program?
- **Process statements** concern the accomplishments of your unit’s functions, such as:
  - level or volume of activity
  - efficiency with which you conduct the processes
  - compliance with external standards or regulations
- **Satisfaction statements** describe how those you serve rate their satisfaction with your unit’s processes or services.

In drafting objectives, it may help to create a flowchart of your unit’s work processes to determine what your unit will accomplish and what students, faculty, staff, and others will think, know or do following the provision of the service.

Consider such questions as:

- What are the most important results or impacts that should occur as a result of your unit’s activities?
- What are your critical work processes and how should they function?

- What does the end user experience through interaction with your unit?

SMART is an acronym that is often used to determine how well an objective is formulated. A good objective is a SMART objective when it is:

- **Specific** – Be clear about what your unit plans to accomplish, as well as when, where or how. For example, “we will expand our services” does not specify how or by how much or for how many customers the services will be expanded. Words such as *develop*, *encourage* and *enhance* lack specificity. Action words such as *locate* or *reduce* make objectives more specific.
- **Measurable** – Quantify your objective as to targets and benefits, so that your unit can determine if it has reached the objective.
- **Achievable** – Know the objective is something that your unit can accomplish. It is fine to accomplish your objective in incremental steps over several years.
- **Realistic** – Make sure the objective is something that can be done practically in a specific time frame or for a specific amount of money.
- **Time-bound** – When will the objective be done? Tie the objective to a specific time frame.

## Establish Criteria for Success

### Step 3: Determine appropriate assessment measures and criteria.

Once you establish your unit’s objectives, define and identify the sources of evidence you will use to determine whether you are achieving expected impacts. You must detail what will be measured and how it will be measured.

For each outcome, create measures that help your unit in making critical decisions about its processes and services. Build an inventory of existing evaluation and assessment activities. Ask colleagues in similar units at other institutions how they assess their efficiency and effectiveness. When designing your assessment, you should use multiple measures. A composite of results can yield a more realistic picture of your unit’s performance.

## Common types of assessment

- Attitudinal – measures of satisfaction from those you serve
- Direct – counts of unit services
- External – validation (neutral party, auditor, professional standards)

**Criteria or targets for success**

Always aim for a criterion level that stretches your unit's performance. For example:

- How well should we serve our clients?
- 95 percent of our users will be "very satisfied or satisfied" with our services.
- At least 80 percent of eligible employees will participate in training.
- 90 percent of the transcripts will be sent within three days.
- 90 percent of the forms will be processed without errors.

**Assess Performance of Unit****Step 4: Conduct assessment activities.**

Put your assessment plan into action. You must set a schedule for conducting assessment activities. Some assessments may take place monthly, others annually and others even on a triennial basis. Conduct a focus group of those you serve, survey people who have participated in your unit's activities, have an expert come through and review your processes. This time is to find out what others say about your operation.

**View Assessment Results****Step 5: Analyze the findings from your assessments.**

Once the results from your assessments have been collected, see what they can tell you about your program. Consider asking questions such as:

- What can you infer from the data?
- What future actions will you take?
- What changes have you made (or will you make) based on assessment results?
- What are the budgetary implications?

As your unit discusses the assessment results and their implications, celebrate when your unit has accomplished what it planned to accomplish. Come to a clear understanding and agreement on areas that still present opportunities for growth and improvement.

Document the findings of assessment. Summarize your results for reporting purposes; be sure to retain details of documentation on file for reference purposes if needed. As you discuss results, revisit and improve your assessment measures.

**Effect Improvements to Increase Unit Performance****Step 6: Use your results.**

You have not completed the quality enhancement process until you "close the loop" and use results to make improvements to services. Typical changes in services include:

- revising organizational structure
- reallocating resources
- revamping administrative procedures
- modifying or expanding relations with public or external agencies

The decisions you make regarding the course of action for the following year also may lead to a restructuring or revision of your unit's objectives for the following year.

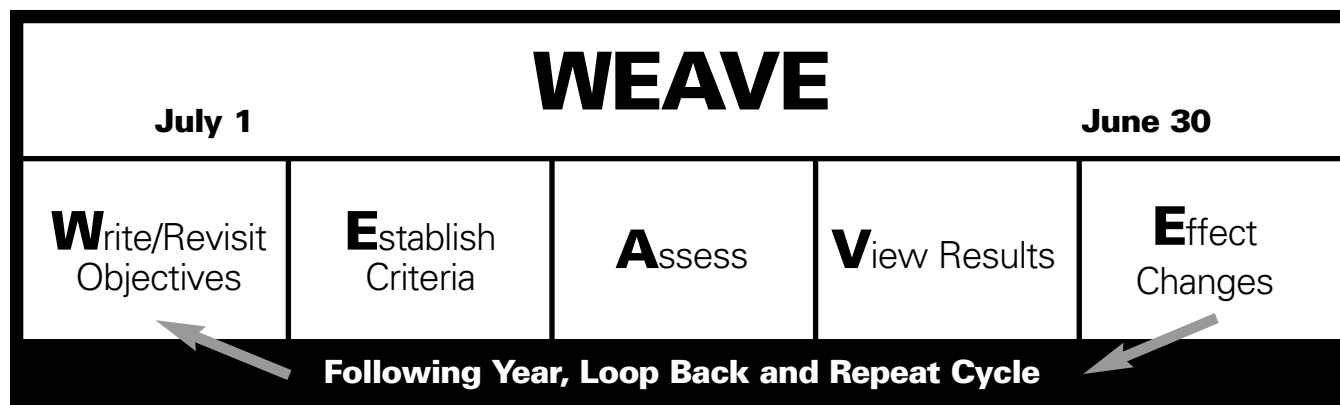
# Reporting

The best time to update objectives is in July of each annual reporting cycle. We will start the year, approximately in July, with goals and objectives in place, assess how well we are doing through the year, and then report results of assessment activities and implications for future actions in June, modifying objectives for the following year.

To assist programs and units in weaving the tapestry of quality enhancement, we are developing a database

for reporting assessment activities. The database will be dynamic and can be updated at any time.

See Appendix C for examples of how a program or unit could use this database. Remember that the information stored should be helpful for future accreditation or other program review activities.



*NOTE: By its very nature, quality enhancement is an ever-evolving process. As Virginia Commonwealth University pursues continuous improvement, new ideas and resources will enter into our thinking, and this guide will be updated to reflect those "best practices" and innovations.*

# Quality Enhancement Reporting Form (2001-02)

for Academic Programs and Administrative  
and Educational Support Units

**Program/Unit Identification**

**Program/Unit Name**

**Unit's VP/School or College Area**

**Unit/Program Purpose or Mission**

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**Objective/Outcome 1**

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**Assessment Measures for Objective/Outcome 1 – Criteria for Success – Time frame**

Assessment Activity	Criterion/What Constitutes Success	Timetable

**Assessment Findings** (to be reported June 2002)

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**Use of Assessment Results** (to be reported June 2002)

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## Additional Resources

The Office of the VCU Self Study, Suite 217, Ginter House, 901 W. Franklin St., has a library of assessment reference materials including ones listed here. For related information, visit [www.vcu.edu/quality](http://www.vcu.edu/quality), our Quality@VCU site.

Assessment manuals from the University of Wisconsin and from Texas A&M were helpful in developing this guide.

**The Departmental Guide and Record Book for Student Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness** by Karen W. Nichols and James O. Nichols (Agathon Press, 2000) provides many examples and more in-depth discussion of the elements in this guide. Copies can be ordered at [www.agathonpress.com](http://www.agathonpress.com).

**The Department Head's Guide to Assessment Implementation in Administrative and Educational Support Units** by Karen W. Nichols and James O. Nichols (Agathon Press, 2000) has more detail and provides many examples. Copies can be ordered at [www.agathonpress.com](http://www.agathonpress.com).

**Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses** by Mary E. Huba and Jann E. Freed (Allyn and Bacon, 2000) has a number of real university examples of learning outcome statements and of rubrics or criteria defining success. Copies can be ordered at [www.ablongman.com](http://www.ablongman.com).

**Assessment Essentials** by Catherine A. Palomba and Trudy W. Banta (Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999) is an excellent introduction to the assessment process in higher education. Copies can be ordered at [www.jossey-bass.com](http://www.jossey-bass.com).

Another interesting resource, featuring an article by VCU's own Dr. Frank Baskind, is **Assessing Student Competence in Accredited Disciplines**, edited by Catherine A. Palomba and Trudy W. Banta (Stylus Publishing, 2001). Copies can be ordered at [www.styluspub.com](http://www.styluspub.com).

**Planning for Assessment – Mission Statements, Goals and Objectives: A Guide for Colleges and Universities** by L.F. Gardiner (Office of Learning Assessment, New Jersey Department of Higher Education, 1989) has help on writing goals and objectives.

Finally, **Effective Grading** by Barbara Walvoord and Virginia Johnson Anderson (Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998) “discusses how the grading process may be made more effective in individual classrooms and how the information about student learning that the grading process yields may be used within an institution’s assessment plan.” (Preface, xvii). Copies can be ordered at [www.josseybass.com](http://www.josseybass.com).

# Appendix A: Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning

## From the American Association for Higher Education Assessment Forum

### 1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.

Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve.

Educational values should drive not only what we choose to assess but also how we do so. Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what's easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about.

### 2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated and revealed in performance over time.

Learning is a complex process. It entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but values, attitudes and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom. Assessment should reflect these understandings by employing a diverse array of methods, including those that call for actual performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth and increasing degrees of integration. Such an approach aims for a more complete and accurate picture of learning, and therefore, a firmer basis for improving our students' educational experience.

### 3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes. Assessment is a goal-oriented process.

It entails comparing educational performance with educational purposes and expectations — those derived from the institution's mission, from faculty intentions in program and course design, and from knowledge of students' own goals. Where program purposes lack specificity or agreement, assessment as a process pushes a campus toward clarity about where to aim and what standards to apply; assessment also prompts attention to where and how program goals will be taught and learned. Clear, shared, implementable goals are the cornerstone for assessment that is focused and useful.

### 4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.

Information about outcomes is of high importance; where students "end up" matters greatly. But to improve outcomes, we need to know about student experiences along the way — about the curricula, teaching and kind of student effort that lead to particular outcomes.

Assessment can help us understand which students learn best under what conditions; with such knowledge comes the capacity to improve the whole of their learning.

### 5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic. Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative.

Though isolated, "one-shot" assessment can be better than none; improvement is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of activities undertaken over time. This linked series may mean tracking the progress of individual students, or of cohorts of students; it may mean collecting the same examples of student performance or using the same instrument semester after semester. The point is to monitor progress toward intended goals in a spirit of continuous improvement. Along the way, the assessment process itself should be evaluated and refined in light of emerging insights.

### 6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.

Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility. Thus, while assessment efforts may start small, the aim over time is to involve people from across the educational community. Faculty play an especially important role, but assessment's questions can't be fully addressed without participation by student-affairs educators, librarians, administrators and students. Assessment may also involve individuals from beyond the campus (alumni/ae, trustees, employers) whose experience can enrich the sense of appropriate aims and standards for learning. Thus understood, assessment is not a task for small groups of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.

**7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.**

Assessment recognizes the value of information in the process of improvement. But to be useful, information must be connected to issues or questions that people really care about. This principle implies assessment approaches that produce evidence that relevant parties will find credible, suggestive and applicable to decisions that need to be made. It means thinking in advance about how the information will be used, and by whom. The point of assessment is not to gather data and return “results”; it is a process that starts with the questions of decision makers, that involves them in the gathering and interpreting of data, and that informs and helps guide continuous improvement.

**8. Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.**

Assessment alone changes little. Its greatest contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and continually worked. On such campuses, the push to improve educational performance is a visible and primary goal of leadership;

improving the quality of undergraduate education is central to the institution’s planning, budgeting and personnel decisions. On such campuses, information about learning outcomes is seen as an integral part of decision making and avidly sought.

**9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public. There is a compelling public stake in education.**

As educators, we have a responsibility to the publics that support or depend on us to provide information about the ways in which our students meet goals and expectations. But that responsibility goes beyond the reporting of such information; our deeper obligation — to ourselves, our students and society — is to improve. Those to whom educators are accountable have a corresponding obligation to support such attempts at improvement.

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# Appendix B: Examples of Scoring Rubrics

## Persuasive Speech Rating Scale

	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>
<p><b>Opening Statement</b> Does the opening statement grab the attention of the audience?</p>				
<p><b>Content of Speech</b> Is the speech written in a logical order? Did you develop good sentences? Are ideas presented clearly?</p>				
<p><b>Persuasiveness</b> Did you include three reasons to persuade? Was your persuasiveness effective?</p>				
<p><b>Closing Statement</b> Do you have a closing statement? Was it an effective summing of speech?</p>				
<p><b>Posture</b> Are you standing up straight during your speech?</p>				
<p><b>Eye Contact</b> Are you looking at the audience occasionally?</p>				
<p><b>Voice Projection</b> Are you speaking clearly and loudly?</p>				

From Linda Suskie, Coordinator of Assessment, Towson University

## An Example of a Rubric for a Research Paper

	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Distinguished</b>
<b>Voice and tone</b>	Limited awareness of audience	An attempt to communicate with the audience	Evidence of voice and/or suitable tone	Evidence of distinguished voice and/or appropriate tone
<b>Purpose</b>	Limited awareness of purpose	An attempt to establish and maintain purpose	Focuses on a purpose	Establishes and maintains clear focus
<b>Development of ideas</b>	Minimal idea development, limited and/or unrelated details	Unelaborated idea development; unelaborated and/or repetitious details	Deep idea development supported by elaborated, relevant details	Deep and complex ideas supported by rich, engaging and pertinent details; evidence of analysis, reflection and insight
<b>References</b>	Few references	Some references	Use of references indicates ample research	Use of references indicates substantial research
<b>Organization</b>	Random or weak organization	Lapses in focus and/or coherence	Logical organization	Careful and/or suitable organization
<b>Wording and sentence structure</b>	Incorrect and/or ineffective wording and/or sentence structure	Simplistic and/or awkward sentence structure	Controlled and varied sentence structure	Variety of sentence structure and length
<b>Language</b>	Incorrect or lack of topic and/or transition sentences	Simplistic and/or imprecise language	Acceptable, effective language	Precise and/or rich language
<b>Grammar and format</b>	Errors in grammar and format (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, headings)	Some errors in grammar and/or format that do not interfere with communication	Few errors in grammar or format relative to length and complexity	Control of surface features

From Linda Suskie, Coordinator of Assessment, Towson University  
 Adapted from [http://129.7.160.115/COURSE\\_INST\\_59031/Rubric.html](http://129.7.160.115/COURSE_INST_59031/Rubric.html)  
 11/28/2001

# Appendix C: Examples Office of the Registrar\*

Quality Enhancement Reporting Form (2001-02)

**Program/Unit Identification**

Office of the Registrar

Vice President for Student Affairs

**Program/Unit Name**

Unit's VP/School or College Area

**Unit/Program Purpose or Mission**

The Registrar's Office is responsible for processing applications for admission, maintaining registered student records, receiving grades and processing transcripts.

**Objective/Outcome 1**

To process transcript requests efficiently and correctly

**Assessment Measures for Objective/Outcome 1 – Criteria for Success – Time frame**

Assessment Measure and Criterion for Success	Timetable
1a. Average number of days from receipt of transcript request to posting of response will be reduced from five to four days	One week sample each semester
1b. Completion of "over the counter" requests for transcripts will be filled within 24 hours	Measured two randomly selected days per month
1c. Survey of students who stand at counter and who have requested transcripts will find 90 percent satisfied or very satisfied with services provided	Biennial survey in fall

**Assessment Findings** (to be reported June 2002)

1a. Average number of days from receipt of transcript request to posting of response was 4.3, the longest response time was 6 days.

1b. During registration requests were unfilled after 48 hours.

1c. Survey found 90 percent satisfied. Several students suggested an online request form would be more efficient.

**Use of Assessment Results** (to be reported June 2002)

1a. Progress was noted. Records will be kept to determine high demand times.

1b. Transcript staff need to be present during registration.

1c. Staff is investigating the development of an online transcript request form.

\*Adapted from Nichols and Nichols, The Department Head's Guide to Assessment Implementation in Administrative and Educational Support Units

# B.S. in Forensic Science – Assessment Matrix

Here is another way to write your learning objectives and assessment measures.

<b>W</b> Write Objectives	<b>E</b> Establish Criteria		<b>A</b> Assess	<b>V</b> View Results	<b>E</b> Effect Change
<b>Learning Objective</b>	<b>Assessment Measure</b>	<b>Criterion of Success</b>	<b>Schedule</b>	<b>Results or Findings</b>	<b>Use of Results/ Implications for Future Actions</b>
1. Understand basic principles of biology and chemistry applicable to forensic science	1a. Forensic biology track capstone course exams 2a. American Chemical Society standard exams 3a. Items on employer and alumni surveys	1a. 90% of students score above 85% 2a. 90% of students pass the ACS standard exams 3a. <b>(still to be determined)</b>	1a. Sr. year 1b. Annually 1c. Biannually/annually		
2. Demonstrate understanding of capabilities, use, potential and limitations of forensic lab techniques and instruction	2a. Students complete short papers in labs 2b. Students' ability in labs observed by instructors and is part of their evaluation 2c. Evaluation of lab reports 2d. Items on employer and alumni surveys	<b>(still to be determined)</b>	ongoing ongoing ongoing Biannually/annually		
3. Understand and perform basic biological lab procedures, including DNA analysis	3a. Forensic biology track capstone course exams 3b. Students complete short papers in labs 3c. Students' ability in labs observed by instructors and is part of their evaluation 3d. Evaluation of lab reports 3e. Items on employer and alumni surveys	<b>(still to be determined)</b>	Sr. year ongoing ongoing ongoing Biannually/annually		
4. Understand and perform basic chemical lab procedures for forensic analysis	4a. Students complete short papers in labs 4b. Students' ability in labs observed by instructors and is part of their evaluation 4c. Evaluation of lab reports 4d. American Chemical Society standard exams 4e. Items on employer and alumni surveys	<b>(still to be determined)</b>	ongoing ongoing ongoing Annually Biannually/annually		
5. Demonstrate understanding of the laws of criminal procedure	5a. Comprehensive essay exams 5b. Oral presentations and discussion sessions 5c. Items on employer and alumni surveys	<b>(still to be determined)</b>	Jr./Sr. years ongoing Biannually/annually		
6. Understand duties and responsibilities of forensic scientists	6a. Required courses FRSC 101 and 201, Forensic Science I and II 6b. Comprehensive essay exams 6c. Internships 6d. Items on employer and alumni surveys	<b>(still to be determined)</b>	Fr./Soph. years Jr./Sr. years Sr. year Biannually/annually		
7. Demonstrate proper techniques for crime scene processing	7a. Comprehensive essay exams 7b. Internships 7c. Items from employer and alumni surveys	<b>(still to be determined)</b>	Jr./Sr. years Sr. year Biannually/annually		