NEASC Expectations for the Assessment of Student Learning

I. The institution demonstrates its active engagement in assessing what students know and can do as a result of their education - and uses the results for improvement.
   - Assessment is in the institution's plan.
   - Assessment is part of college, department, or unit plans.
   - Assessment is ongoing and regular, independent of accreditation and other external reviews.
   - Assessment appears on the agenda of key institutional groups (e.g., governing board, faculty executive committee, department faculty meeting).

II. The approach to assessment is thoughtful and related to the institution's mission.
   - The institution's mission or comparable statement indicates what students are expected to learn or how they are expected to benefit from the resources provided.
   - The institution's program of assessment has been designed to fit its mission and special character and strengths.
   - Assessment takes place at the institutional and program levels, as well as at the level of individual courses.
   - The institution's assessment program includes goals for student retention and graduation, appropriate to the institution's mission.
   - As appropriate, the institution's assessment program includes goals for student success in licensure examinations, job placement within a specified time after graduation, or entering a specified level and quality of advanced study.
   - The areas on which students are assessed reflect the institution's priorities, as indicated in the mission or comparable statement.
   - The assessment program has been developed in a participatory manner.
   - The institution systematically improves its assessment program.
   - Areas including student services and the library are appropriately involved in the assessment of student learning.

III. Assessment centers on what students know and can do.
   - The general education program includes a statement of expected learning outcomes.
   - Students are assessed on general education learning outcomes beyond individual courses.
   - Each program (major, concentration) has a statement of expected learning outcomes and has implemented a plan to assess those outcomes.
   - Assessment programs have an appropriate balance of direct as well as indirect evidence, and include both quantitative and qualitative measures.
   - At least some of the assessment evidence has external reviews or benchmarks (e.g., surveys with national norms, external reviewers of student exams or portfolios).

IV. The institution provides leadership for assessment - from the president, CAO, faculty - along with appropriate support.
   - The governing board has a working understanding of the institution's program of assessment.
   - Statements from the president indicate support for assessment.
   - The chief academic officer has overall responsibility for assessment of all degree programs.
   - Key faculty leaders are involved in the assessment program.
   - Support is provided to the assessment program (e.g., faculty development, data gathering and analysis, time to gather and use the results).

V. The institution demonstrates using the results of assessment for improvement.
   - Evidence of student learning in students' majors or concentration is systematically reviewed by the program or department faculty.
   - Evidence of student learning for those areas that go beyond the students' major (e.g., general education, writing, information literacy, student engagement) is widely shared within the institution and formally considered by the appropriate individuals and groups.
   - The use of assessment results includes evaluating the assessment methods and improving the program of assessment.
   - The uses of assessment for improvement are documented (e.g., in department plans, faculty assignments, curricular changes, budget requests).
   - Plans for future assessment activities are designed, in part, to provide evidence on those areas of the curriculum or other areas of student engagement that have been identified as needing improvement.

VI. The institution has a system of assessment, and the system itself is evaluated, with the results used for improvement.
   - Institutional role and responsibilities for assessment are clear and well known within the community.
   - The institution has addressed the feedback about its assessment program provided in the most recent accreditation review.
   - Systematic attention is given to how the institution can improve its system of assessment.
Evidence of student learning can be collected through both direct and indirect methods during students' undergraduate and graduate careers and after graduation. A range of methods that provide direct and indirect evidence of student learning are listed below.

### Some Methods that Provide Direct Evidence of Student Learning
- Locally developed tests
- Standardized tests
- Pre- and post-tests
- Essay tests blind scored across units
- Internal juried review of student projects
- External juried review of student projects
- Externally reviewed internships
- Performance on national licensure examinations
- Student work samples
- Collections of student work (e.g., Portfolios)
- Course-embedded assessment
- Observations of student behavior.

### Some Methods that Provide Indirect Evidence of Student Learning
- Alumni, employer, student surveys
- Focus groups
- Exit interviews with graduates
- Graduate follow-up studies
- Percentage of students who go on to graduate school
- Retention and transfer studies
- Job placement statistics.

### Methods that Do Not Provide Evidence of Student Learning
(Although the following methods may be useful to an institution for purposes other than student outcomes assessment, they do not provide direct evidence of student learning.)
- Faculty publications (unless students are involved)
- Courses selected or elected by students
- Faculty/student ratios
- Percentage of students who study abroad
- Enrollment trends
- Percentage of students who graduate within five to six years
- Diversity of the student body
- Size of the endowment
- Number of books in the library
NEASC Policy Statement on Institutional Effectiveness

In the current Standards for Accreditation, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education has reaffirmed the importance of each institution measuring its effectiveness. An institution's efforts and ability to assess its effectiveness and use the obtained information for its improvement are important indicators of institutional quality. The Commission, through its evaluative processes, will appraise these quality indicators. Just as assessment is now a pervasive theme throughout the standards, so too should it be a theme in all comprehensive self-studies.

The Commission views such assessment as a means of enhancing institutional effectiveness. The assessment process requires the gathering and analysis of evidence of congruence between an institution's stated mission, purposes, and objectives and the actual outcomes of its programs and activities. In order to inform its planning, decision-making, and resource allocation, an institution needs to determine how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its mission and purposes. Moreover, the institution needs documentary evidence to support assertions of quality made in its self-study and in its communications with its constituencies.

The Commission expects each institution, as part of its dedication to institutional improvement, to monitor its effectiveness in achieving its mission and purposes. Accordingly, the institution collects and analyzes relevant data and uses this information in the institutional planning process as a basis for sustaining quality and self-improvement. Thus, assessment functions as a tool for the encouragement of such improvement as well as a basis for quality assurance.

There is no one best way to assess institutional effectiveness, and the Commission prescribes no formula that an institution must use for measuring or demonstrating its effectiveness. Assessment efforts will vary among different types of institutions as well as among institutions of the same type. Successful assessment efforts are compatible with the institution's mission and its available resources.

Assessment is not a one-time activity; rather, it is evolutionary, ongoing, and incremental. The Commission realizes that an institution initially engaging in assessment will be likely to do so on a limited basis. However, it expects that in due time its assessment efforts will be more comprehensive, systematic, integrative, and organic. Regardless of their scope, these efforts will be both qualitative and quantitative. Assessment does not require standardized or even professionally developed instruments or complicated methods of statistical analysis.

While assessment is an overall institutional concern, as reflected in the various standards for accreditation, its primary focus is the teaching-learning experience. To the greatest extent possible, therefore, the institution should describe explicit achievements expected of its students and adopt reliable procedures for assessing those achievements.

Ultimately, assessment and accreditation share the common goal of enabling the institution to reach its fullest academic potential by providing the highest quality education possible. In pursuing that goal, institutional autonomy should be preserved, innovation encouraged, and the distinct character of each institution recognized and honored.

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