

CAL POLY HUMBOLDT

Assessment and Program Review Policy

[Policy Number]

Office of Assessment

Applies to: Faculty and staff

Supersedes: N/A

Purpose of the Policy

To promote continuous, evidence-based improvement in support of the university's statement of purpose, this policy document outlines the requirements for assessment and program review at Cal Poly Humboldt. All academic programs, co-curricular programs, and operational units are included in this policy in order to maintain a comprehensive institutional effectiveness program.

The practices of assessment and program review serve both external and internal needs at Cal Poly Humboldt, as the university is beholden both to the expectations of its external stakeholders and accreditor and to its own internal standards of excellence.

Externally, rigorous practices of assessment and program review are essential for Cal Poly Humboldt both as a public trust expected to create, preserve, and disseminate knowledge for the public good and as a WSCUC-accredited university subject to numerous review criteria. In order to maintain and improve the university's accreditation, Cal Poly Humboldt programs/units are charged with assuring the quality and continuous improvement of all services that support the university's vision, values, and beliefs. Among other things, the university's accreditor looks for evidence of an infrastructure to assess student learning at program and institution levels, effective co-curricular programs designed to support all students' personal and professional development, and a deliberate set of quality-assurance processes in both academic and non-academic areas, including systematic review of all programs offered.

Assessment and program review also serve internal needs. While compliance with accreditation expectations is vital, robust processes of assessment and program review are also indispensable components of Cal Poly Humboldt's goals to foster excellence, creativity, and innovation. Faculty, staff, and administrators are united in their commitment to continuous improvement based on the results of inquiry, evidence, and

evaluation. Importantly, this commitment is motivated not by pursuit of compliance, but by pursuit of excellence.

Definitions

Academic assessment is the process of measuring and improving student learning. Faculty define their expectations via learning outcomes, collect empirical data to evaluate student attainment, and reflect on findings to improve learning.

An **academic program** is a sequence of courses leading to a degree. Some academic programs constitute an entire department, some share department designation with other academic programs, and some span multiple departments. Additionally, the university's GEAR program is treated as an academic program, in accordance with Executive Order 1100, which requires assessment of GE learning outcomes and "regular periodic reviews of GE program policies and practices in a manner comparable to those of major programs, including evaluation by an external reviewer."

Co-curricular refers to student activities, programs, and learning experiences that complement what students learn through the academic curriculum. These programs primarily have direct engagement and/or impact on students and their learning. This category includes academic support programs/units, initiatives, activities, and services and can demonstrate impact on student retention, persistence, and/or graduation. Other campuses may refer to this as student affairs assessment. Examples include Housing and Residence Life, the Center for Community Based Learning, and Campus Recreation.

Operational units serve administrative functions that maintain the institution and are essential to its operations. These units may include operational, structural, and/or organizational programs, initiatives, activities, and services as well as auxiliaries and self-support offices. Other campuses may refer to these units as administrative, nonacademic, or educational-support units. Examples include Facilities Management, Marketing and Communications (MarCom), and Information Security.

MBU refers to major budget unit. For budgeting purposes, MBUs are smaller than divisions and larger than departments. MBUs are at the same level as colleges.

The above characteristics are offered not as formal university definitions but to clarify their use in this policy document and to guide programs/units in developing and implementing their assessment structure. Some programs/units may have activities that

have overlapping purposes. Academic, co-curricular, and operational activities may not be mutually exclusive for an individual program/unit. For example, place-based learning communities (academic and co-curricular) and Financial Aid (co-curricular and operational) serve more than one function.

Policy Details

I. Guiding Principles of Assessment

The following guiding principles are necessarily general in that they apply equally to all forms of assessment (academic, co-curricular, and operational) and all areas on campus. The principles implicitly respect and support shared governance, drawing on the subject-matter expertise of our faculty, staff, and administrators. Our assessment activities are guided by Cal Poly Humboldt's collective purpose, vision, and values. Assessment is aligned with all phases of our university strategic plan, and it affirms our commitment to continuous improvement and inclusive excellence.

1. **Student-Centered:** Assessment should be conducted with the goal of improving the student experience.
2. **Prioritized and Supported:** Quality assessment is a vital component of university integrity. Resource allocation should support its practice — and should prioritize innovations that result from it. Leaders from all principal stakeholders must support good practice as an ongoing and dynamic effort that is sensitive to change. This includes recognizing and rewarding examples of best practice.
3. **Meaningful:** Assessment should be useful and significant. Results should answer questions that are important to the program or unit doing the measuring while also informing overall institutional quality. Efforts should compare findings with desired outcomes and objectives — not with the findings of other programs or units.
4. **Integrated:** Assessment is part of an agenda for excellence and should be integrated in the functions of all university work, from conceptualization to development and implementation.

5. **Formative:** Assessment is a formative process where various ongoing assessments yield insights that inform program changes in real time, including the action of making no change.
6. **Summative:** Assessment examines results over an entire cycle, which allows for summative reflection on the effectiveness of practices followed by evidence-informed changes.
7. **Inspirational:** Insights from earnest assessment can prompt bold re-envisioning and transformational action. Assessment should be seen as an opportunity to identify alternative pathways to achieving desired outcomes. It should yield actionable results — results that should never be used punitively.

II. Annual Assessment

IIa. Academic Assessment

Responsible Parties:

Expectations of learning assessment are communicated under the authority of the provost, with year-to-year coordination and oversight by the university's associate director of academic assessment in collaboration with department chairs, program coordinators, and the GEAR Committee chair.

What Programs Do:

Programs will structure their faculty workload in such a way that ensures that they are fulfilling the following learning-assessment activities in support of evidence-based continuous improvement:

- Programs maintain a six-year assessment plan¹ posted on the university's academic assessment web page. Plans are structured according to the CSU's expectations, with student learning outcomes (SLOs) aimed at demonstrating achievement of program learning outcomes (PLOs), which, in turn, are aligned

¹ Plans align to the university's seven-year program-review cycle by outlining six years of assessment activity followed by program review in the seventh year.

with the university's institutional learning outcomes (ILOs). All PLOs shall be assessed at least once per six-year cycle.

- Programs collect and analyze data according to the schedule identified in their assessment plans.
- Programs submit annual assessment reports to the associate director of academic assessment describing the findings, discussions, and actions resulting from their assessment activities.

Timeline:

Each fall, programs will submit a report describing the learning-assessment activities of the previous academic year. These annual assessment reports are due on November 1st. A template identifying report specifics as well as submission and archival procedures is located on the university's academic assessment web page.

Iib. Co-Curricular and Operational Assessment

Responsible Parties:

Expectations of annual co-curricular and operational assessment are communicated under the authority of the President's Administrative Team, with coordination with the Integrated Assessment and Planning Working Group. More specific year-to-year coordination and oversight is provided by the university's associate director of institutional assessment in collaboration with vice-presidents, provost, college deans, major budget unit (MBU) directors, and department managers.

What Programs Do:

Programs will structure their staff workload in such a way that ensures that they are fulfilling the following assessment activities in support of evidence-based continuous improvement:

- Programs maintain a six-year assessment plan posted on the university's institutional assessment web page. Plans are structured according to the expectations set forth by the Integrated Assessment and Planning Working Group, with unit objectives aimed at demonstrating achievement of division outcomes, which, in turn, are aligned with the university's strategic planning goals.
- Assessment plans should be reviewed and approved by the unit's MBU director, dean and/or divisional VP every seven years.
- Programs collect and analyze data each academic year (summer, fall, and spring) according to the schedule identified in their assessment plans.

- Programs submit annual assessment reports to the associate director of institutional assessment and divisional leadership describing the findings and discussions resulting from their activities.

The unit is responsible for designating a team or person to write and submit its annual assessment report. Departments, MBUs or divisions that oversee one or more units are expected to establish internal processes and deadlines for their units regarding the submission, review, and collection of final drafts of their units' annual assessment reports. After an initial review of the unit assessment report has been completed by the associate director of institutional assessment and all feedback has been addressed, a final draft should be submitted to the division before October 1st.

Timeline:

Each fall, programs will submit a report describing the learning-assessment activities of the previous academic year. These annual assessment reports are due from the division to the Provost's office on November 1st. A template identifying report specifics as well as submission and archival procedures are located on the university's institutional assessment web page. The divisions are responsible for ensuring that the Office of Assessment has access to all their units' annual assessment reports, including accompanying evidence.

III. Program Review

IIIa. Academic Program Review

Responsible Parties:

Academic program reviews shall be conducted under the authority of the provost, with coordination and oversight by the university's associate director of academic assessment in collaboration with the Integrated Curriculum Committee (ICC) and the Office of Institutional Research, Analytics, and Reporting (IRAR).

What Programs Do:

Each program undergoing review (see below for exceptions for externally accredited programs) will prepare a self-study in which they engage with institutional data

identifying program performance in metrics reflecting university priorities, summarize and reflect on the cycle's assessment activities, create a new six-year assessment plan, and draft an action plan for the coming cycle. The self-study template is located on the university's academic assessment web page.

Self-studies are submitted to the ICC for university-internal peer review according to ICC bylaws and according to the deadline in place that academic year. Programs will reflect on peer recommendations prior to sending their self-studies to external reviewers.

After receiving its ICC peer review, the program in review will send its self-study to an external reviewer in advance of the reviewer's campus visit.² External reviews shall be conducted in the spring of the review year. The specifics of the external reviewer's report are contained in a template available on the university's academic assessment web page.

What Administration Does:

After reading a program's self-study and internal and external reviews, the provost, college dean, department chair, and program lead (where applicable) will bring the process to a close via an MOU by the end of the following fall semester. MOUs identify actions and responsible parties for the coming cycle.

Schedule of Academic Program Review:

Reviews of academic programs occur every seven years. Program cycles comprise six years of learning assessment and other actions followed by review and planning in year seven. Actions performed over the six years (beyond annual assessment expectations) are determined by the MOU that ended a given program's previous review cycle.

² Virtual external reviews are subject to dean approval on a case-by-case basis.

The associate director of academic assessment establishes and maintains the sequence of program reviews, which is posted on the university's academic assessment web page. Postponements or accelerations are granted only for the direst of circumstances.

Externally Accredited Programs:

Program review for externally accredited programs diverges somewhat from the protocol for other Cal Poly Humboldt programs. Accredited degree programs undergo periodic reviews with their accreditors, and, given the significant workload that these reviews involve, these programs are not required to prepare the standard program review self-study for the university. However, the process of accreditation still comprises a self-study, an ICC peer review, an external review, and an MOU upon completion.

The year preceding an accreditor's evaluation shall be considered the program review year for an externally accredited program. The accreditor determines the self-study format (diverging from Cal Poly Humboldt's standard self-study) and serves as the external reviewer. The ICC will conduct its peer review by reading the self-study prepared for the accreditor; the deadline for submission to the ICC will be determined by the deadline for the accreditation paperwork.

The MOU concluding the process will identify a timeline of actions and responsible parties for the coming (in this case, accreditation) cycle. As with non-accredited programs, the MOU will serve as an action plan agreed upon by the program, the college dean, and the provost. The accreditor's requirements and recommendations may determine much of the MOU's content.

IIIb. Co-Curricular and Operational Program Review

Responsible Parties:

Co-curricular programs and operational units conduct program reviews under the authority of the President's Advisory Team, with coordination and oversight by the university's associate director of institutional assessment in collaboration with the Integrated Assessment and Planning Working (IAPW) Group and the Office of Institutional Research, Analytics, and Reporting (IRAR).

What Programs Do:

Each program undergoing review (see below for exceptions for externally accredited programs) will prepare a self-study in which they engage with data identifying program performance in metrics reflecting university, division, and diversity and inclusion priorities, summarize and reflect on previous assessment activities, and create a new six-year assessment plan that also aligns with the institutional strategic plan. The self-study template is located on the university's institutional assessment web page.

Self-studies are submitted to the IAPW for university-internal peer review according to the deadline in place that year. Programs and units will reflect on peer recommendations prior to sending their self-studies to external reviewers.

After receiving its IAPW peer review, the program in review will send its self-study to an external reviewer in advance of the reviewers' campus visit. External reviews shall be conducted in the spring of the review year. The specifics of the external reviewer's report are contained in a template available on the university's institutional assessment web page.

What Divisions Do:

After reading the program's / unit's self-study and internal and external reviews, the vice president or provost will meet with the MBU or department manager and bring the process to a close via an MOU identifying actions and responsible parties for the coming cycle.

Schedule of Co-Curricular and Operational Program Review:

Reviews of co-curricular programs and operational units occur every seven years. The cycle comprises six years of annual assessment and actions followed by review and planning in year seven. Actions performed over the six years (beyond annual assessment expectations) are determined by the MOU that ended a given program's previous review cycle.

The associate director of institutional assessment establishes and maintains the sequence of program reviews, which is posted on the university's institutional assessment web page. Postponements or accelerations are granted only for the direst of circumstances.

Externally Accredited Programs:

Program review for externally accredited programs diverges somewhat from the protocol for other Cal Poly Humboldt programs. Accredited programs like the Health Center and the Child Development Center are required to report periodically with their accreditors, and, given the significant workload that these reports involve, these programs are not required to prepare the standard program review self-study for the university. However, the process of accreditation still comprises a self-study, an IAPW peer review, an external review, and an MOU upon completion. The accreditor determines the self-study format (diverging from Cal Poly Humboldt's standard self-study) and serves as the external reviewer. As with non-accredited programs, the MOU will serve as an action plan agreed upon by the program, the college dean, and the provost. The accreditor's requirements and recommendations may determine much of the MOU's content.

History

Issued: MM/DD/YYYY

