Memo To: All UH-Downtown/PS Holders

From: Dr. Loren J. Blanchard, President

Subject: Assessment of Academic Programs

UH-Downtown/PS 03.A.31
Issue No. 3
Effective Date: 3/21/2025
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1. PURPOSE

1.1.   This policy describes the University's system for assessing educational programs and improving student learning through the use of assessment.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1.   Educational Programs: For the purposes of this policy, educational programs are coherent sets of courses leading to a credential (degree, certificate, or stand-alone minor). Assessment of the General Education Program is addressed in PS 03.A.41 General Education Program policy.

2.2.   Program Faculty: The full-time faculty who are either engaged in teaching courses specifically in an academic degree program, or who provide oversight to degree programs.

2.3.   Program Learning Outcomes: Measurable statements that formally state the knowledge, skills, beliefs, and/or attitudes program faculty have identified as important for graduates of that program to obtain. Program learning outcomes are a part of a program's degree plan.

2.4.   Direct Assessment Methods: Assessment methods that are based on the analysis of explicit student behaviors or products, such as tests, papers, projects, presentations, portfolios, performances, etc., in which they demonstrate how well they have mastered learning outcomes.

2.5.   Indirect Assessment Methods: Evaluations of perceptions about mastery of learning outcomes, via instruments such as surveys, interviews, or course evaluations. The perceptions may be self-reports by students, or other relevant stakeholders.

3. POLICY

3.1.   Use of Program Learning Outcomes

3.1.1.   Program-level learning outcomes must appear in the University catalog and program websites.

3.1.2.   Proposals for new educational programs must include program learning outcomes and an assessment plan describing how the faculty will measure student achievement of program learning outcomes. A program proposal shall also include a) courses mapped to program learning outcomes, and b) course learning outcomes mapped to program learning outcomes.

3.1.3.   Proposed instruction-related funding initiatives submitted in unit plans must include a discussion of how the funding will enhance the unit's ability to achieve its mission and/or program outcomes and how the success of the proposed initiative will be assessed.

3.2.   Assessment Coordinators: Every educational program must have an assessment coordinator who oversees the implementation of the program's assessment plan. An assessment coordinator may oversee multiple programs. If the assessment coordinator is a faculty member, they will be appointed by department chair and compensated with either one course release per year or a stipend based on their workload. The compensation will be decided by the department chair in consultation with the college dean.

3.3.   Assessment Plans:

3.3.1.   Each academic program conducts assessment annually, supervised by the program's assessment coordinator. Artifacts are collected and evaluated by program faculty, following the program's assessment plan. Each plan must include:

3.3.1.A.   The program's purpose or mission.

3.3.1.B.   At least three student learning outcomes that the program faculty commit to assess regularly.

3.3.1.C.   At least two methods of assessment per program learning outcome. At least one method must be direct.

3.3.1.D. Success criteria (i.e., the standard by which faculty determine whether or not student performance has met faculty expectations of learning); and

3.3.1.E. A three-year assessment schedule in which at least one program-level learning outcome is assessed each year; and all program-level learning outcomes are assessed at least once during the three-year schedule.

3.3.2. Assessment plans must report independent results for different modes of instruction or site of instruction once the total number of graduates completing 50 percent of their UHD coursework, beyond the common core, online or at an off-campus site reaches 20 students during an academic year for undergraduate programs, or 10 students per year for graduate programs.

3.4. Artifacts to be assessed: Student artifacts being evaluated for the purposes program assessment should be produced by those students who have declared the program as a credential goal (declared as a major or certificate, etc.). Artifacts for each assessment cycle should be less than one year old at the time of assessment.

3.5. Assessment reports:

3.5.1. Assessment reports include:

3.5.1.A. Which Programs Learning Outcomes are being assessed.

3.5.1.B. Assessment methods and related success criterion.

3.5.1.C. A summary of findings (to include the number of student work products reviewed and/or individuals surveyed, methodology used to collect data and the degree to which student performance met faculty expectations), disaggregated by significant subgroups as outlined in 3.3.2.

3.5.1.D. Supporting documentation including surveys, rubrics, data sets, etc.

3.5.1.E. Notes or minutes from faculty meetings in which assessment-related issues were discussed.

3.5.1.F. Interpretation of the findings.

3.5.1.G. Overview of strategies for improving student learning and assessment and an implementation plan.

3.5.1.H. A report on the degree to which planned improvements from prior years' assessment reports have been implemented.

3.6. Use of Assessment results:

    3.6.1. Program-level assessment must be independent of individual student grades and focused on the aggregate performance of students.

    3.6.2. Program-level assessment results are to be used to improve programs as a whole, and not to be used in the formal evaluation of individual faculty performance in annual evaluation, rank and tenure, or personnel decisions unless a faculty member voluntarily provides assessment information for that purpose.

3.7. Assistant Directors of Assessment: Each college will have an Assistant Director of Assessment that will serve in an advisory role to the college's assessment coordinators, as well as to the Dean. ADAs will also serve as liaisons to the Office of Assessment.

3.8. Responsibilities of Chairs, Deans, and OAA: Before the final Assessment Reports are submitted, they are reviewed by the department chair, college dean, and the office of Assessment and Accreditation, who may make recommendation to the Assessment Coordinator to integrate into the final report. Any such recommendations will be included (along with meeting minutes and other ancillary materials) in the final report. Reviewers have the following responsibilities:

    3.8.1. OAA: The Office of Assessment and Accreditation reviews programmatic assessment reports for formal compliance. This may include fulfillment of the assessment plan, completion of all parts of the assessment report, and the proper analysis of assessment data. The OAA is not meant to make suggestions about changing curricula.

    3.8.2. Chairs and Deans: The role of the Chair and Dean review is to review the curricular implications of assessment results. This may include suggestions for how to improve areas that the assessment process identifies as needing improvement, comments on the progress of improvement strategies from previous assessment cycles, or the possibility of changing either PLOs, or of standards for success in assessment.

3.9. University Assessment Committee:

    3.9.1. Duties: Provide an annual report to the provost, president, and the wider UHD community, documenting the strengths and weaknesses of the university's overall effort in assessment, and any recommendations to promote continuous improvement in the assessment process.

    3.9.2. UAC Membership: General Education Committee Chair, the Assistant Directors of Assessment, the Director of Assessment and Accreditation, the Executive Director of Assessment and Accreditation, the Associate Vice President Programming and Curriculum, Associate Vice President, Institutional Effectiveness, Strategic Planning and Assessment, and Chair of University Curriculum Committee.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1. Timetable for Reporting Assessment Results:

    4.1.1. The program assessment coordinator submits the assessment report to the chair (or program director if there is no chair) by November 15.

    4.1.2. After review, the chair/program director submits the assessment report to the dean, and simultaneously to the Office of Assessment and Accreditation, no later than November 30.

    4.1.3. Any recommended revisions to the assessment reports will be communicated to the Assessment Coordinators by December 15.

    4.1.4. Finalized revisions of assessment reports due to the Office of Assessment and Accreditation by February 1, which posts finalized assessment reports to the assessment tracking system by February 15.

    4.1.5. University Assessment Committee meets by March 1 to begin writing their report to the President and the UHD community.

4.2. Timetable for Revising Assessment Plans

    4.2.1. Following the finalization of Assessment Reports, and in light of any recommendations from the department chair and/or dean, the program assessment coordinator may facilitate the review and amendment of assessment plans by program faculty.

4.2.2. Program assessment coordinator will submit revised assessment plans to chair for approval by January 30.

4.2.3. Updated assessment plans are due from chairs to deans by February 15.

4.2.4. Finalized revisions of assessment plans are due from the dean to the Office of Assessment and Accreditation by March 1.

4.2.5. Program assessment coordinator will ensure the finalized assessment plan is posted to the assessment tracking system by April 1.

5. REVIEW PROCESS

Responsible Party (Reviewer):   Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Review Period: Every four years on or before July 1.

Signed original on file in Human Resources.

6. POLICY HISTORY

Issue #1: 08/25/2008
Issue #2: 05/28/2013
Issue #3: 03/21/2025 (this issue)

7. REFERENCES

PS 03.A.41 General Education Program policy

8. EXHIBITS

There are no exhibits associated with this PS.