

**Assessment Advisory Council (AAC)**  
**Membership and Charge**  
**(Approved April 2003)**

**Membership (beginning Fall 2003):**

Committee membership is intended to represent primarily the Division of Academic Affairs on issues related to student learning outcomes assessment, comprised of both faculty and staff from all Colleges and appropriate support units. The chairperson is to be appointed by the Vice President and Provost. Appointments for committee membership are made from the following units:

- College of Applied Science and Technology (faculty member)
- College of Arts & Sciences (faculty member)
- College of Business (faculty member)
- College of Education (faculty member)
- College of Fine Arts (faculty member)
- Mennonite College of Nursing (faculty member)
- Milner Library (faculty member)
- Office of the Provost
- Academic Senate – (Academic Affairs – faculty member)
- University Curriculum Committee
- Graduate Curriculum Committee
- Council for Teacher Education
- Deans' Group
- Chairs' Council
- General Education Coordinating Committee
- Planning & Institutional Research
- University Assessment Office
- Students (one appointed by the Academic Senate, one appointed by the Honors Program)

These appointments are renewable two-year terms and are not restricted by job classification except as otherwise indicated. All appointees should have a basic knowledge, interest, and ability to contribute to the coordination and examination of assessment activities related to student learning outcomes. As the assessment focus of the University will vary from year to year it may require that additional committee members be added on an ad hoc basis.

**Responsibilities:**

The Assessment Advisory Council (AAC) will meet periodically throughout the year to review processes related to the assessment of student learning outcomes and various reports and utilization of assessment results to improve student learning. Based upon this continuous review, the AAC is to recommend additions, deletions, and modifications of these processes to advance the quality of student learning at Illinois State. The AAC provides recommendations to the staff of the University

Assessment Office in its service to the institution on related matters. The Council works to ensure that appropriate resources are provided for assessment activities.

Specifically, the AAC will serve the institution in five areas related to the assessment of student learning outcomes:

**1. IBHE *Illinois Commitment* Goal 5**

Goal 5 of *The Illinois Commitment* stipulates, “by 2004, *all* academic programs will systematically assess student learning and use assessment results to improve programs” (see Appendix A). Academic departments at Illinois State University have engaged in a 3-year process to formalize and document their assessment plans since Fall 2000 and come into initial compliance with the intent of Goal 5 by June 2003. A critical element of the IBHE requirement is that each institution must put a system in place to monitor “findings and recommendations for improvement . . . at least yearly.”

The specific assessment processes will be developed by faculty within each academic department and according to the context of the discipline. There is currently no institutional system in place to monitor academic assessment plans across the institution. The AAC will develop a process that is formative in nature and separate from, yet complementary to, the current and future Program Review structure.

**2. Connections with *Educating Illinois* Strategic Plan**

The institution continues to work toward embedding principles of assessment into the planning and budgeting process. The AAC will maintain a close relationship with the work of the *Educating Illinois* Coordinating Team, as well to be involved in initiatives related to teaching and learning.

**3. Connections with External Accreditation Requirements and Events**

The AAC will address procedural issues related to both institutional and discipline-specific involvement in accreditation of academic programs, as well as how internal processes can be better aligned with external requirements.

For example:

- Select members and the chair of the AAC will serve on teams of the institutional self-study in preparation for the North Central Association accreditation visit in February 2005. The AAC will also receive regular reports from the NCA Steering Committee in order to stay informed of the progress and processes of this important institutional assessment activity.
- Select members will serve on teams preparing for NCATE accreditation and will assist the Council for Teacher Education in considering both short- and long-term plans for systematic oversight and support across campus.

#### **4. Advisory group to UAO**

The AAC will receive regular reports from the staff of the University Assessment Office with regard to activities and initiatives that meet the goals and objectives of the unit, that further the institutional commitment to sound assessment practices, and are consistent with established priorities. The members of the AAC will also discuss new and innovative ways to use assessment-related evidence to promote improvement in academic practice and institutional effectiveness.

#### **5. Review state and national scene**

The AAC will serve the institution to monitor both state and national trends in the area of outcomes assessment, providing clarification and recommendations to related decision-making entities on campus, such as, the Academic Senate, the Chairs' Council, the Provost's Advisory Council, the President's Cabinet, and the Board of Trustees.

#### **Rationale:**

The Faculty Advisory Council of the Illinois Board of Higher Education stated in a recent position paper<sup>[1]</sup> that “the demands of higher education have become so complex that faculty and administrators must work together to address them.” In the area of assessment of student learning outcomes the FAC went on to posit that “faculty have insights to offer administrators about the needs of their students, appropriate means of assessing what their students know, and the ways in which administrators themselves can help them serve their students and the institution as a whole.”

The newly organized Assessment Advisory Council (AAC) will satisfy the scope and intent of the FAC position statement to bring faculty and staff together on this complex challenge, provide Illinois State University with a coordinated approach to assessment through sound educational practice, and ensure that the richly unique discipline-based perspectives will be maintained.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Faculty's Rights and Responsibilities in Higher Education – FAC Position Paper (January 31, 2003)

## APPENDIX A

### STATE OF ILLINOIS BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

#### QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

(Excerpt from *Goal 5 of the Illinois Commitment*)

##### **Assessment of Student Learning**

**Assessment of Student Learning** is the central integrating quality assurance and improvement element binding Academic Program Approval and Academic Program Review and Improvement. Assessment of Student Learning is an ongoing process that occurs at the program level. It is also a key accountability element of the Performance Indicators presented in Item 6. Assessment is defined as the systematic determination of what students know and are able to do as a result of completing a unique program of study. This assessment should include multiple qualitative and quantitative measures of student learning. These assessment results must then be used to improve the quality of curriculum, teaching, and student learning.

Goal 5 of *The Illinois Commitment* stipulates, “by 2004, *all* academic programs will systematically assess student learning and use assessment results to improve programs.” The following guidelines should inform the development of student learning assessment and program improvement:

- Assessment plans and quality processes should be faculty, program, and campus-driven.
- Assessment plans and program approval and review processes should build on existing activities, i.e., integrate and expand on existing assessment activities.
- Assessment activities should focus on the measurement and improvement of student learning outcomes, including multiple qualitative and quantitative assessments, as appropriate to the discipline.
- Assessment of mastery and quality should not be a one-time event, but rather, a continuing process that monitors and self-regulates the educational enterprise to ensure that quality is continually enhanced.

The Illinois Board of Higher Education staff, in cooperation the with Chief Academic Officers, identified the following elements as critical for assessment of student learning in all undergraduate (including general education) and graduate programs:

1. A statement of program goals and intended student learning outcomes developed by each program’s faculty that reflects the uniqueness of the program.
2. Systematic (at different points throughout the program, including end-of-program evaluation) assessment of student learning that uses multiple qualitative and

- quantitative measures and reflects the uniqueness of academic programs and disciplines (e.g., evaluation of capstone experiences, internships, portfolios, and other types of performance measurements; performance on standardized, locally-developed, or professional licensure and certification exams).
3. Feedback gathered from key stakeholders—current students, alumni, and employers of graduates, graduate schools, etc. (e.g., surveys of student and alumni satisfaction; alumni job placement information; employer satisfaction).
  4. Evidence of a formal and effective feedback/improvement mechanism, i.e. that the program faculty are engaged in a regular assessment and review process, and that the assessment of student learning and stakeholder feedback are used to improve curriculum, instruction, and learning.
  5. Findings and recommendations for improvement are monitored by the institution for results at least yearly.
  6. Assessment and improvement results are submitted to the Illinois Board of Higher Education as part of an institution's normal schedule for reporting Program Review findings and recommendations, which are appended to the Institutional Results Report.

As part of the program review process, the execution and finding of assessment of student learning should be an integral element of the ongoing feedback loop that forms the basis for improving curriculum, instruction, and learning. Additional information and explanation is presented in the paper *Putting Students First: Assessing Mastery of Student Learning* which can be accessed through the Illinois Board of Higher Education website ([www.ibhe.org](http://www.ibhe.org)).

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