

Guide for the Evaluation of Undergraduate Academic Programs

**State University of New York
University Faculty Senate**

The Undergraduate Committee of the University Faculty Senate
and the Faculty Council of Community Colleges
of the State University of New York

Undergraduate Committee Members 2008-2011

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Background

The SUNY University Faculty Senate (UFS) and the Faculty Council of Community Colleges (FCCC)¹ sponsor activities that improve the quality of academic experiences across the SUNY system. As a seminal part of our efforts to set and maintain high standards of excellence in all areas of faculty concern, this document aims to aid faculty and administration in conducting high quality evaluations of undergraduate academic programs across the SUNY system.

The SUNY Faculty Senate's Undergraduate Committee undertook a review of the literature on effective program review in 1983, 1999, and most recently in 2009-2010, to inform the development and revision of the *Guide for the Evaluation of Undergraduate Academic Programs*. This revision reflects the most recent research and theory in program evaluation. It also acknowledges the increasing centrality of assessment of student learning and the use of data in program evaluation as well as the increasing role of technology.

This guide is not a policy document of the State University. Rather, it is a resource that faculty and others can use as they implement University policy in Trustees Resolution 2010-039 and Memorandum to Presidents 2010-02.² SUNY's requirements for the evaluation of each registered academic program are straightforward.

- Evaluation should occur in five-to-seven year cycles, or programmatic accreditation cycles of ten years or less.
- At a minimum, each evaluation should include an assessment of student learning, and an external review, which may involve specialized accreditation or campus selection of reviewers.
- Each evaluation should meet or exceed the increasingly rigorous standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and, as applicable, specialized accrediting bodies.
- As applicable, campuses should send final determinations from specialized accrediting bodies to the University Provost at Assessment@suny.edu within 30 days of receipt.

SUNY policy refers to the standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and specialized accrediting bodies in order to streamline campus efforts. Resources for campuses on assessment and evaluation in general, and on Middle States expectations in particular, are available at http://www.suny.edu/provost/academic_affairs/assessment.cfm and http://www.suny.edu/provost/academic_affairs/RegAccred.cfm.

¹ The official representative bodies of the SUNY faculty

² Both documents are available at http://www.suny.edu/provost/academic_affairs/assessment.cfm.

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Executive Summary

The Guide provides an outline of how to proceed with an academic program evaluation. This Guide will be most useful to the department chair or unit academic officer charged with developing and implementing a program evaluation. At the same time, the document provides guidance, advice, and direction for every individual, department, governance, and administrator involved in the evaluation process and a set of useful references and highly relevant appendices.

Importance of Context and Support

Program evaluation must be supported at the institutional level by creating a “culture of assessment” at all levels of the institution. Although often associated with accountability, program evaluation is a cooperative activity that requires energy and time to be done properly and have the greatest positive effect for all involved. The administration provides support by collaborating with the faculty, through governance, to establish clear roles and responsibilities for evaluation and assessment. These roles are shared across a broad spectrum of the institution and beyond, depending on the type of program. For example, a program that affects local schools would involve external constituencies as well as campus faculty, staff and administration. The idea of a “culture of evaluation” acknowledges the ongoing nature of program evaluation. Programs must be revisited regularly in order to continue to improve over time. Administration and faculty should collaborate to develop a multi-year schedule, procedural steps and timelines in order to enable ongoing program evaluation of every program on campus.

Additionally, the administration provides support and guidance, relevant data, data management systems and research and information on best practices. Administration also demonstrates the importance and relevance of program evaluation for tenure and promotion as service to the institution and establishes institutional guidelines for self-study, for campus accreditation and other requirements. Finally, administration collaborates with faculty and staff to develop vision, mission, and value statements to guide program development and evaluation.

The guide defines evaluation and distinguishes it from the term academic assessment; although it acknowledges that assessment data are also used in a program evaluation, as one type of measure of students’ knowledge gained in a course or academic program. Several terms used in evaluation are introduced and defined: Criteria, measure of quality performance, standards, benchmarks, assessments, and data. The benefits of evaluation to the students, faculty, department/program, and institution and the fact that evaluation can be used to strengthen and improve programs are also discussed.

Typical steps to program evaluation such as formulating an effective plan for monitoring and evaluating a program are introduced. Critical questions are addressed, such as identifying stakeholders and the knowledge and competencies students are expected to acquire. Also discussed, is how the curricula relate to one another and how the curricula support institutional and programmatic goals and how the evidence is used to strengthen the program. Defining the mission, values and goals of the program and institution is important to form a base, serving as a framework to guide goals and outcomes. It is equally important to obtain the

resources (clerical support and budget) for evaluation. These resources are needed to identify all stakeholders, and keep an open dialogue throughout the process to assist in identifying standards and measures of a program review. Rounding out the evaluation, one defines measures of quality, analyzes data that used those measures, and uses the data to make recommendations for improvement. These recommendations should be shared with the constituencies involved. The curriculum should be mapped and data collection should be continuous to reflect the teaching and learning process of assessing, instructing, evaluating, and planning based on the evaluation.

Suggested characteristics of good program evaluation are provided by regional accrediting bodies:

1. Role of student learning, documentation of student learning, including clear learning goals, collecting evidence of attainment, applying collective judgment as to the meaning of the evidence, using the evidence to improve the program(s)
2. Compilation of evidence from multiple sources
3. Stakeholder involvement - the collection, interpretation, and use of student learning and attainment evidence is a collective endeavor
4. Capacity building - the institution should use broad participation in reflecting about student learning

Program evaluation should be part of the curriculum design process, and should not be isolated from the program as it is being taught. Evaluation is not simply something that occurs every five years. It should reflect a culture of continuous improvement with discussion of evaluation occurring periodically. An institution has established a “culture of evaluation” when assessment and evaluation are embedded in the regular discourse surrounding the curriculum and the student experience.

Specific content of the evaluation and a self-study should include at a minimum

- Vision and mission statements
- Description of the program
- Description of program outcomes
- Description of faculty (mastery of subject matter or faculty qualifications, effectiveness of teaching, scholarly ability, service, growth)
- Description of the students, their characteristics in annual cohorts, graduates (employment, further education, time-to-degree), recruitment, student needs, special student services, support services, analysis of student engagement from such instruments as the NSSE and the CSSE, general student life, and finally data from assessment of Student Learning and Performance (key assignments, assessment instruments, learning outcomes, student satisfaction, focus on improvement)
- Uses of the program evaluation and assessment findings
- Conclusion

The role the administration plays in supporting program evaluation is briefly discussed, but includes contextualizing the program within the institution as to how it contributes to the mission. Therefore a full and complete mission statement is needed, and the institution must be committed to maintaining and improving the quality and effectiveness of its programs. Training of administrators is needed on the following:

- Effective ways to encourage and support evaluation
- Creation of a climate for success
- Fairness of reward structure
- Ways to empower faculty and students
- Budget decisions and resource allocation processes that reflect concern for quality programs
- Development of an organizational chart
- Description of how the program is represented in governance and planning processes
- Faculty development and support efforts by administration in the program area

The final section provides questions and guidance on evaluating the technology and library resources and support programs provide as well as their evaluations. There is a robust bibliography and several appendices that provide academic references on evaluation as well as the Context for Academic Program Evaluation in SUNY (Appendix A), Institutional and Departmental Characteristics That Support Effective Evaluation (Appendix B), Characteristics of Effective Evaluations of Academic Programs (Appendix C), and a Sample Outline for a Program Self-Study at a SUNY State-Operated Campus (Appendix D).

I. Introduction

Like earlier versions, this guide provides a framework for conducting meaningful evaluations of academic programs. Its goal is to provide SUNY faculty with a research-based framework for developing, implementing, and maintaining effective program evaluation processes that:

- result in the improvement of the academic experience of students;
- contribute important information to short- and long-range planning processes for departments, academic units and institutions;
- follow the standards of the policies of the SUNY Board of Trustees and the Standards of Shared Governance of the AAUP, which state that the “university’s curriculum is the responsibility of the faculty”³, and
- enhance the overall effectiveness of the program, department, and institution.

This Guide can be used to help develop, implement, and maintain program evaluations for both internal and external purposes. It will supplement guidance from the New York State Education Department, the State University of New York, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, and most specialized accrediting agencies and professional organizations.

II. How does an institution support program evaluation?

Effectively evaluating academic programs is a shared responsibility between faculty and other constituents of the institution.⁴ Because they are ultimately responsible for designing and implementing the academic program, faculty are central to the process.⁵ Assessment and program evaluation are important faculty responsibilities in program design, implementation and review.

The effectiveness of program evaluation depends significantly on an institutional setting that supports a culture of evaluation through policies and procedures that:

- Establish clear roles and responsibilities for program evaluation and other assessment activities as part of an institution-wide plan of institutional effectiveness, keeping in mind that faculty hold key roles as the designers and implementers of all curriculum and instruction;

³ AAUP, *Standards of Shared Governance*. 2005, paragraph 17.

⁴ Maki, P. (2004). *Assessing for Learning: Building a Sustainable Commitment Across the Institution*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

⁵ Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) (2006). *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Eligibility and Standards for Accreditation*, p.51.

- Establish a multi-year schedule for the evaluation process that culminates in self-study reports and other assessment documents that can be used to inform strategic planning and the improvement of programmatic and institutional effectiveness. Schedules may include flexibility for special purpose or focused evaluations designed to address specific questions about a program such as the viability of an existing capstone experience or the conceptual focus of a major or minor;
- Establish the procedural steps and timelines involved in program evaluation – including the creation of assessment plans (planning and development), the implementation of assessment plans (collecting data), the analyzing and reporting of findings, and finally using the results for strategic planning and resource allocation (closing the loop);
- Provide ongoing support and guidance throughout the evaluation process, providing relevant institutional data to programs and identifying and implementing best practices including the selection of external reviewers for self-studies;
- Demonstrate the importance of program evaluation by including it in tenure and promotion criteria and in the workload calculations of faculty leaders of the process;
- Establish institutional guidelines for the components of self-study reports with the flexibility for departments and programs to design their own according to their needs and accreditation and other requirements; and
- Provide other support and guidance for faculty and staff on matters ranging from value and mission statements to records management and use.

Furthermore, effective program evaluation occurs when institutions use timelines that involve the evaluation of elements of the program each year, so that the preparation of the self-study is a synthesis of ongoing activities rather than a single, special event.⁶

III. What is evaluation?

The root word of evaluation is value. The evaluation process reflects the values and ideals of a group, society, field, or individual program and the criteria for evaluation derive from these core values and the questions posed by the process reflect these values. The process of evaluation often becomes a process of values clarification and helps participants to refine their educational ideals.⁷

⁶ López, C., (2006). The Assessment Matrix: Providing Evidence of a Sustainable Commitment to Student Learning. In Hernon, P., Dugan, R.L., and Schwartz, C. (Eds.) (2006). *Revisiting Outcomes Assessment in Higher Education*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

⁷ Kellaghan, T., Stufflebeam, D.L., & Wingate, A. (Eds.). (2003). *International Handbook of Educational Evaluation*. The Netherlands: Kluwer.

Formal definitions of evaluation range from the succinct: “the process of judging the worth or merit of things, and evaluations are the product of that process,”⁸ to the lengthy:

Evaluation is the process of delineating, obtaining, providing, and applying descriptive and judgmental information about the merit and worth of some object’s goals, design, implementation, and outcomes to guide improvement decisions, provide accountability reports, inform institutionalization/dissemination decisions, and improve understanding of the involved phenomena.⁹

Program evaluation is familiar to many faculty because it utilizes concepts and methods commonly used in their teaching and scholarship. Although evaluation entails using teaching and research methods, its aim is not knowledge development; rather, it is to help those who have a stake (stakeholders) in the program being evaluated, make judgments and take actions to strengthen the program, improve institutional effectiveness, and ultimately maximize the academic experience of their students. “Research seeks *conclusions*; evaluation leads to *judgments*”¹⁰ and recommendations for action.

IV. What is assessment and how does it differ from evaluation?

Throughout a program and at significant points of instructional closure, **assessment** is used to determine how well students are learning. This indirectly tells how well the program is working, but the focus of assessment is on the students and not on the program. For example, student assessment data may not tell anything about the effectiveness of a course sequence. Student outcomes assessment provides data that help in program evaluation and improvement,¹¹ but it is only one part of the evaluation process, which has a broader perspective. Direct student assessment is based on measurable student behaviors that can be demonstrated by students and objectively observed to assess student learning. Indirect student assessment is based on student perceptions from evaluations and surveys. Evaluation uses these data as part of a larger process.

V. What is an academic program?

The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation defines programs as activities provided on an ongoing basis.¹² This guide is focused on the evaluation of undergraduate academic programs also known as curricula – literally the “running course” from the word *currere* in Latin. These programs or curricula represent a series of in-class and out-of-class experiences thoughtfully designed and sequenced to build knowledge and skills in students

⁸ Scriven, M. (1991). *Evaluation Thesaurus* (4th ed). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

⁹ Stufflebeam, D. (2003). The CIPP Model. In *International Handbook of Educational Evaluation*. The Netherlands: Kluwer, p. 34.

¹⁰ Fitzpatrick, J., Sanders, J., & Worthen, B. (2004). *Program Evaluation: Alternative Approaches and Practical Guidelines* (3rd ed.). New York: Pearson, p. 6.

¹¹ Pellegrino et al., (2001). *Knowing What Students Know: The Science and Design of Educational Assessment*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

¹² Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. (1994). *The Program Evaluation Standards* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

that the faculty, the discipline and, ultimately the society consider relevant and important for student development. When parts of the program are offered off-campus in any format, they are part of the program. For example, classes may be offered internationally, with local high schools, as certification programming or field experiences. In-class experiences may be web-based or utilize other distance learning formats.

VI. What are some terms used in evaluation?

Although there are terms that are commonly used in program evaluation and its companion student learning assessment, they are often used interchangeably, confusing those seeking to write accreditation and evaluation reports. A useful glossary of evaluation terms can be found at <http://ec.wmich.edu/glossary/index.htm>. Some common terms and their most common uses are provided below with examples.

- a. The word *criteria* usually refers to the levels of performance used as markers of quality. For example, in evaluating a project, performance, or exhibition, evaluators set criteria for meeting a normative standard of excellence, not meeting that standard, or exceeding the standard. Guidelines from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education on constructing criterion-based rating scales (rubrics) for evaluation are provided in Appendix E.
- b. *Standards* are broad benchmarks against which the criteria are compared, the *desired or target performance*. The word *benchmark* is often used to refer to a standard. In program evaluation, the standards are the benchmarks for program performance and differ from student performance standards that guide assessment.¹³ In Appendix F, the standards or benchmarks are listed in the first column. The term *performance indicator* is a business term primarily used in education in assessment of student learning. Performance indicators can be used in program evaluation to define target performance.
- c. *Assessments* are the methods used to collect evidence of performance that, through *criteria that delineate levels of quality of performance*, indicate to what degree *standards* are being met. A number of assessments over time provide evidence for inferring conclusions about a program and making decisions for actions toward program improvement.
- d. *Data* are the sets of information collected from assessments of a variety of program elements that constitute evidence of student learning and other criteria that are indicators of academic program quality.

¹³ Good examples of the difference between standards and criteria may be found in the Middle States publication *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education- 2009 Edition*. Available at http://www.msche.org/publications_view.asp?idPublicationType=1&txtPublicationType=Standards+for+Accreditation+and+Requirements+of+Affiliation

VII. What are the benefits of program evaluation?

The evaluation of academic programs has direct benefits for faculty and students. When conducted effectively, evaluation

- a. provides meaningful information that can be used to strengthen programs
- b. fosters dialogue among stakeholders
- c. empowers faculty and other institutional stakeholders
- d. promotes the development of shared goals
- e. fosters collegiality
- f. results in the continuous improvement of institutions and programs, allowing them to remain responsive and relevant in today's environment of exponential change¹⁴
- g. enables institutions and programs to successfully meet the expectations and requirements of external entities¹⁵

VIII. What are typical steps in the program evaluation process?

a. Ask critical questions. The process begins with the actual decision to establish an effective plan for monitoring and evaluating a program that is meaningful and useful to the stakeholders of the program. Discussions among the stakeholders, often occurring over the course of one or more semesters, address the following critical questions:

- What knowledge, competencies and dispositions do we expect students to acquire from the program?
- How do the curricula (courses and other experiences) relate to each other and support the achievement of programmatic and institutional mission and goals?
 - Where are courses offered, such as online, at branch campuses and in international programs, in high schools, as joint programs, and as cross registered courses?
 - Who teaches the courses- tenure track faculty or adjunct faculty?
 - When are courses offered- summer, winter, spring, fall?
- How does the faculty know that programmatic goals are being achieved? What evidence of progress toward goal attainment has been collected?
- How are the results of the evaluation process, the evidence, being used to strengthen the program and keep it current?

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ For example, to participate in federal student assistance programs, an institution must meet increasingly rigorous regional accreditation standards. Institutions are required to be able to clearly demonstrate they are progressing toward the achievement of their stated mission and goals, increasing institutional effectiveness, and achieving student learning outcomes in their academic programs using well-designed institutional and programmatic evaluation processes. Similarly, the New York State Board of Regents requires program evaluation as a condition of program registration, as does the SUNY Board of Trustees as a strategy for the continuous enhancement of academic programs.

b. Identify all stakeholders to ensure representation. Stakeholders - people affected by the program and who have a “stake” in the program - should be involved in the entire evaluation process. Hence, it is important to identify all stakeholders and ensure that representatives from each subgroup (i.e. faculty, students, administrators, preceptors, employers, graduate schools, transfer institutions, etc.) are involved from the beginning of the process, which is led by the faculty.

c. Revisit vision and mission and goals of the program, department, unit, and institution. Early in the process, revisiting the vision, mission, and goals of the program and institution is important for providing the necessary framework for developing a program evaluation. All the program’s activities should derive their relevance and coherence from the framework of the collaborative vision and mission, which reflect core values.¹⁶

d. Delineate and obtain necessary resources. Once these elements are addressed, delineating and obtaining the necessary resources to support a program’s evaluation is a critical next step. As noted earlier, the institution should provide the needed support for such things as the education and training of faculty, sufficient release time, and other relevant resources such as clerical support and a budget. These resources help ensure that effective evaluation of academic programs is occurring.

e. Engage in open dialogue, maintaining student confidentiality. Performance criteria for learning outcomes and other goals should be reviewed and set, and open dialogue should be encouraged to clarify relevant academic values and indicators of quality.

f. Consult standards. Specialized accrediting bodies, professional associations, and scholarly disciplinary societies often have developed appropriate criteria, standards, and measures for program review and should be consulted.

g. Clarify notions of quality. Quality is more difficult to define; therefore, faculty, students, administrators and other stakeholders affected by the program should collaboratively engage in a dialogue to clarify the meaning of the term in a way that makes sense to stakeholders and those outside the program. Definitions of quality should be considered in light of the literature and relevant standards in the discipline¹⁷ and should lead to the development of criteria and standards that will be the indicators of the effectiveness of the program being evaluated.

h. Map the curriculum, if necessary. Curriculum mapping is a process of linking content and skills to particular courses and experiences. Mapping out a curriculum is beneficial because it determines where specific learning outcomes are being addressed and assessed in the courses in the program and helps to identify missing content and unnecessary repetitiveness.

¹⁶ Dugan, R. & Hernon, P. (2006). Institutional Mission-centered Student Learning. In Hernon, P., Dugan, R.E., & Schwartz, C. (Eds.) (2006). *Revisiting Outcomes Assessment in Higher Education*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

¹⁷ Suskie, L. (2006). Accountability and Quality Improvement. In Hernon, P., Dugan, R. E., & Schwartz, C. (Eds.) (2006). *Revisiting Outcomes Assessment in Higher Education*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

The most basic form of a curriculum map of a program is the plan of study, which delineates the course sequence. Most plans of study are based on assumptions of key concepts and skills being taught in specific courses that build competence and mastery of a subject over time. A detailed curriculum map includes those concepts and skills as well as the courses and the assessments used in those courses to judge how well the students mastered the content and skills: the outcomes. Excellent guidelines and examples of curriculum maps may be found at the University of West Florida Center for Teaching and Learning website http://uwf.edu/cutla/curriculum_maps.cfm.

i. Use the data collected over time from multiple sources. Data collection should be continuous such that it occurs throughout the entire teaching and learning process of which evaluation is a part. Evaluation cycles are commonly 5-7 years and involve the assessment of some programmatic goals and objectives each year. Thus, the evaluation of a program is an ongoing process that culminates with a self-study report that represents a synthesis of annual evaluations rather than a once-and-done event. The use of multiple measures to collect comprehensive sets of data results is important because it yields more valid results compared to single measures of performance. A rule of thumb is to use at least three sources to triangulate the data in each area of evaluation. These are defined by the faculty and others who are conducting the evaluation.

j. Do not use program evaluation to evaluate individual faculty. To encourage the use of evidence to support conclusions in program evaluation and decision-making, findings should be openly shared and interpreted without violating individual student or faculty confidentiality. Program evaluation is not used for the evaluation of individual faculty performance. Rather, good program evaluation is a collegial process that involves a free and open discussion of general effective teaching and assessment practices conducted in a climate where risk-taking and innovation are encouraged rather than scrutinizing the performance of individuals.

k. Review all findings with all stakeholders. The findings of the evaluation process should be reviewed by all stakeholder groups and be the basis for program revisions, resource allocations, and ultimately the improvement of the learning experience of students.

l. Establish a culture of evaluation. Ultimately, the effectiveness of a program evaluation for ensuring that a program is achieving established standards of quality depends largely upon the culture of evaluation that exists at the campus where the program is offered. As the *Report of the Provost's Advisory Task Force on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes* states, "each campus is responsible for overseeing the process through which the assessment of academic major programs takes place, following existing curriculum and governance procedures."¹⁸

¹⁸ <http://www.suny.edu/sunypp/docs/633.pdf>

IX. What are some characteristics of good program evaluations?

The following list of suggested items for guiding the evaluation of student learning was adopted in 2003 by the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions.¹⁹

a. Role of student learning in accreditation. Educational quality is one of the core purposes of the institution, and the institution defines quality by how well it fulfills its declared learning mission.

b. Documentation of student learning. The institution demonstrates that student learning is appropriate for the certificate or degree awarded and is consistent with the institution's own standards of academic performance. The institution accomplishes this by:

1. Setting clear learning goals, which speak to both content and level of attainment;
2. Collecting evidence of goal attainment using appropriate assessment tools;
3. Applying collective judgment as to the meaning and utility of the evidence; and
4. Using this evidence to effect improvements in its programs.

c. Compilation of evidence. Evidence of student learning is derived from multiple sources, such as courses, curricula, and co-curricular programming, and includes effects of both intentional and unintentional learning experiences. Evidence collected from these sources is complementary and portrays the impact on the student of the institution as a whole.

d. Stakeholder involvement. The collection, interpretation, and use of student learning evidence is a collective endeavor, and is not viewed as the sole responsibility of a single office or position. Those in the institution with a stake in decisions of educational quality participate in the process.

e. Capacity building. The institution uses broad participation in reflecting about student learning outcomes as a means of building a commitment to educational improvement.

X. What does a program evaluation measure and what does a self-study report typically include?

Numerous programmatic and institutional factors can be assessed in an evaluation process. The specific elements that are assessed as part of a program evaluation are dictated by programmatic, institutional, and external factors. The nature and content of evaluation reports, commonly referred to as the program review or self-study document, is determined most

¹⁹ Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions. (2003). *Regional Accreditation and Student Learning: Principles for Good Practices*.

frequently by the agency for which the report is being prepared. Generally institutions, accrediting organizations, professional associations, and government bodies have very specific guidelines for the preparation of a self-study report.

Above all, academic program evaluation should be part of a regular process of designing curriculum and enacting instruction and assessment of students. It is connected to those processes and is not an activity that is isolated from the program itself. In a **culture of continuous improvement**, data are collected on an ongoing basis, retained, and analyzed in light of the program mission, goals and outcomes, and used to make program changes or maintain program activities that are deemed worthwhile. This is not only good practice, it is a requirement of all accrediting bodies, including Middle States (Standards 7-145), the New York State Education Department, and the SUNY Board of Trustees. As noted at the beginning of this document, according to the AAUP, it is the responsibility of the faculty who design and teach the programs to be centrally involved in these activities.

Formatting and content of a program review is dictated primarily by the agency for which the report is being prepared, so it is always best to follow their guidelines. It is not a fill-in-the-blanks process! Nonetheless, program reviews often begin with an overview of the program's context within the institution and the broader community and field. Once the context is set, program reviews frequently focus on the program's vision and mission, which guide the rest of the study, and then present **evidence of the program's performance in light of the aspirations defined by the vision and mission**. The following list is suggestive of the types of information that may be included in program reviews. The actual information that is included should be based on 1) the purpose of the evaluation; 2) the key questions of faculty, staff and administration; and 3) the agency for which the report is being prepared.

a. Vision and mission statements

1. The vision statement situates the program in the field, the institution and the global society. This includes a rationale for the program, defined by this vision, justifying its focus and emphases.
2. The mission statement is a succinct statement that reflects the goals of the program and their relationship to the institutional mission statement. This congruence between the program and the departmental and institutional visions and missions provides the foundation for coherence that is the hallmark of excellent institutions and programs. Coherence enhances and focuses teaching and learning and provides a model of integrity for the students. A program design that integrates what it says it values in its vision and mission statements into its goals, content and activities has integrity.
3. Vision and mission statements delineate the program's goals and objectives, which are often categorized in terms of knowledge, or content, skills, or performance, and dispositions, the attitudes and habits of mind necessary to develop deep understanding in and mastery of the subject.

4. The goals and objectives within vision and mission statements must be aligned with accepted standards in the field.

b. Description of the program

1. Specify the degree requirements for the program, using the format of the catalog description of the program. (It may have to be revised as a result of this review.)
2. Describe the congruence between course and program goals and national standards and expectations in the discipline or profession, as appropriate.
3. Describe the congruence between course and curricular goals, courses, and prerequisite patterns.
4. Explain the balance between breadth and depth designed in the program.
5. Describe the methods used to ensure comparable learning outcomes among multiple sections of a course, such as common syllabi or common examinations, peer observations and/or frequent planning meetings.
6. Describe efforts to assure that required courses and electives are offered on a schedule to meet the needs of various student constituencies.
7. Describe internship opportunities, how they are supervised and assessed, and provide the rationale for assigning credit.
8. Describe research opportunities for students and their place in the program.
9. Describe departmental procedures including student participation for the development, review, and evaluation of courses.
10. Describe advisement procedures and the way the department assesses advisement effectiveness.

c. Description of the program outcomes

1. Analyze the effectiveness of the program in achieving its goals and objectives in the discipline. Describe the procedures, criteria, and methods used for this assessment.
2. Analyze the effectiveness of the program in achieving its goals and objectives in general education. Describe the procedures, criteria, and methods used for this assessment, if applicable.
3. Analyze the effectiveness of the program in achieving its goals and objectives for intellectual growth. Describe the procedures, criteria, and methods used for this assessment.

4. Describe discipline, college, and community-related student activities, and how the program promotes and supports faculty and student involvement and effort.
5. Describe how the program responds to the needs of the community, if applicable.
6. Describe how the program responds to student needs (e.g, retention and completion rates and other indicators).

d. Description of the faculty

The quality and commitment of the faculty is critical to the quality of an undergraduate academic program. The qualifications of the faculty constitute traditional and non-traditional measures, and they are useful to show the extent to which the faculty is prepared to fulfill the mission of the program. The quality of the program also depends upon the availability of the faculty to the undergraduates, the effectiveness of their interactions and the extent to which the faculty creates a participatory culture.

These topics represent reasonable and common criteria for the evaluation of a program.

1. Faculty Profile and Demographics

- a. Number of full-time and part-time faculty assigned to the program
- b. Faculty demographics (gender, racial/ethnic group, age)
- c. Credentials (Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, Doctorate) and other certifications
- d. Year of experience (0-3 years, 4-7 years, 8-11 years, 12-15 years, 16-24 years, 25+ years)
- e. Other evidence of subject matter mastery (e.g., conference attendance, publications, offices held in professional organizations, honors)

2. Effectiveness in Teaching

- a. Describe the hiring procedures, including formulation of the job description, publication of the position, representation on the search committee, and responsibility for the final decision. Include copies of faculty vitae with the report.
- b. Explain how the training and interests of the faculty contribute to appropriate breadth of the program's mission. Indicate areas, if any, in which greater strength would be beneficial.
- c. Analyze teaching loads and how they are distributed among faculty by rank, full-time, part-time, and teaching assistants (number of courses/number of students).

- d. Highlight faculty innovations in teaching, such as new course development, new course delivery methods, new assessments developed and new teaching methods.
- e. Describe the program's procedures for evaluating effectiveness in teaching, wherever and whenever courses are taught.

3. Scholarly Ability

- a. Describe the recent scholarly and creative contributions of the program faculty that are important to the program goals.

It is now acceptable to define teaching as a form of scholarship in many fields. Innovations and/or research in teaching and pedagogy may be included here.

4. Effectiveness of University Service

- a. Describe the faculty's service to the university, such as committee work, administrative work, public service, and other activities that contribute to the fulfillment of the program and the mission of the institution.
- b. Describe relation of the program to the university and the community through the service of the faculty.

5. Continuing Growth

- a. Identify the steps taken to assure that faculty members maintain currency in their disciplines and the activities that result in the continuing growth of the faculty.
- b. Describe the activities and processes faculty members engage in to improve their own teaching to assure the success of all their students in a multicultural society.
- c. Describe the relative weight of the five criteria for evaluation and promotion in the *Policies of the Board of Trustees* in the consideration of rewards: mastery of subject matter, effectiveness in teaching, scholarly ability, effectiveness of university service, and continuing growth.

e. **Description of the students**

In evaluating the effectiveness of an undergraduate academic program, it is essential to consider current and prospective students. Student needs influence the design of the curriculum, the faculty who implement it, and the services that support it. The quality and success of the program depend upon the extent to which it attracts students with the potential to succeed and its ability to meet the needs of its students.

1. Students and Their Characteristics (*Annual cohorts for the last five years*)

- a. Total number of majors, by full-time and part-time status, age and gender
- b. Total student credit hours taught (which includes both majors and non-majors)
- c. Comparison of the student racial/ethnic diversity of the program to that of the institution, other institutions, the region, and the state
- d. First-year retention rates in the program(s)
- e. Other relevant student characteristics (e.g., geographic origin, transfer status)

2. Graduates

-

- a. Number of annual graduates for the past five years
- b. Program completion rates for students matriculated in the program
- c. Time-to-degree for graduates
- d. Mean grade point average for graduates
- e. Other relevant characteristics of graduates (e.g., transfer status, race/ethnicity)

NOTE: Program-level data on students and graduates are available for individual programs in the SUNY dashboards at <https://www.suny.edu/analytics/saw.dll?Dashboard>. Access to these dashboards may be obtained through a campus information security officer or office of institutional research.

3. Recruitment

- a. Describe the program strategies used to recruit students
- b. Identify the program minimum requirements for admitting students
- c. Explain the acceptance ratio
- d. Compare the student diversity of the program to that of the institution, other institutions, the region, and the state
- e. Analyze the enrollment patterns over the last five years

4. Student Needs

- a. Describe the goals of the students entering the program
- b. Describe the financial needs of the students enrolled

- c. Describe the academic needs of the beginning and transfer students
- d. Describe the special needs of groups of students, such as nontraditional, international, disabled, and underprepared students

5. Special Student Services

- a. Describe the provisions made for groups of students with special needs in this program, including:
 - i. Nontraditional students
 - ii. International students
 - iii. Students with disabilities
 - iv. Students who need special remedial or tutorial services
 - v. Nonresidential students
- b. Explain any academic placement procedures
- c. Describe advisement policies and procedures for all students, including special groups
- d. Describe the diverse learning styles of the students and strategies for engaging them
- e. Describe any orientation activities designed to introduce students to the program
- f. Analyze attrition patterns and describe efforts to improve retention
- g. Analyze the time students take to complete degrees

6. Support Services

- a. The academic and student services of the campus provide important support to the instructional efforts of the faculty. Furthermore, support services should contribute directly to the richness of students' academic lives. Examples of such support services could include:
 - i. Campus writing center
 - ii. Student-athlete academic support group
 - iii. Tutoring center
 - iv. Residence hall mentor program

7. General Student Life

- a. Describe the provisions made for all of the students, such as in the following areas:
 - i. Orientation
 - ii. Diagnostic evaluation and placement
 - iii. Library and media resources
 - iv. Computer resources
 - v. Health and counseling services
 - vi. Career advisement
 - vii. Job placement
- b. Describe student and faculty satisfaction with services that support the program.
- c. Describe the general campus environment and climate. Explain their impact upon student performance.
- d. Describe how student affairs and academic affairs are coordinating efforts to contribute to student success.

f. Data from Assessment of Student Learning and Performance

Program evaluation today is considered incomplete without direct evidence of student learning as a result of the program. In some disciplines with specialized accreditation, evaluations must also include data on short- and long-term student achievement as a result of the program. Without reflection on the part of the designers, student assessments may narrowly define learning to the exclusion of other valuable and valid definitions. This is unacceptable in a diverse, global society and clearly does not reflect high program quality. Assessments such as traditional paper-and-pencil tests, while acceptable within a broad framework of varied assessments and key assignments and tasks, do not provide students with ample opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of the subject matter and competencies of the program. Care must be taken to provide multi-faceted views of student performance throughout the program as part of ongoing evidence of student understanding and development. A quality educational environment is created and sustained when institutional assessment includes culturally competent evaluation of student learning outcomes and the student/ faculty learning experience.

Generally, program reviews include a section detailing assessment data as evidence of student performance. These include:

- A description of the learning outcomes students should demonstrate, often organized into three categories: knowledge, skills and dispositions

- A description of programmatic assessment instruments and key assignments that are administered throughout the program to ensure student development, retention and success. These programmatic assessments complement individual faculty-developed assessments in specific courses.
- A description of key assignments through which students demonstrate attainment and mastery of the goals and objectives of the program
 - In order to facilitate assessment of student learning, programs develop performance indicators, measurable student behaviors that can be demonstrated by students and objectively observed by faculty and outside experts to assess student learning. The above assignments should explicitly describe performance indicators and the goals they demonstrate and the criteria by which students' level of performance are assessed.
 - Key assignments are accompanied by rubrics of performance indicators and the criteria by which student performance will be judged.
 - Assessments and key assignments should:
 - be meaningful and relevant to the student faculty interaction
 - focus on learning outcomes
 - be responsive to the dynamic nature of curricula
 - focus on improvement of the program or institution, not the performance of the faculty
 - be individualized and process oriented
 - should respect the academic freedom of individual faculty
 - reflect cognitive, affective, and when relevant, psychomotor skill attainment
- Data on student satisfaction and/or engagement from nationally or locally developed instruments
- Follow-up data on student placement for the last five years, if applicable indicate year(s) of data collected and total number of student responses: percentage employed in the field, percentage employed elsewhere, percentage seeking employment, and percentage continuing education.
- Results of alumni, employer or other follow-up surveys that reflect the student outcomes

g. Uses of program evaluation and assessment findings

Self-studies are clarified for external reviewers and others when they:

- a. Describe the dissemination of the results of the program evaluation to appropriate constituencies
- b. Describe the planning processes, including those to be used to formulate and implement changes based on program evaluation and data analysis
- c. Describe the most recent evaluation of the program, what was learned from the evaluation, and what improvements resulted, in essence, describing the circular process of assess, plan, teach, assess, plan, teach, etc.

h. Conclusion

Based on the discussions held with the stakeholders and other participants, the self-study generally concludes with the following components:

- Discussion of all the above information, drawing conclusions from the data, taking into consideration the perspectives of all involved
- Presentation of the decisions made to change and maintain the program, providing evidence-based rationales for all decisions and actions planned to improve the program in all areas from the kind of culture it fosters in the department or school, to the performance of students in the program and of graduates when they are in the field
- Description of the evaluation of the process of evaluating the program and plans to improve it, with goals and a timeline for taking action toward the goals to improve the program and the evaluation of it between now and the next program evaluation

XI. What is the role of faculty governance in program evaluation?

Optimally, shared governance is directly responsible for defining the policies, guidelines, and roles of the administration and academic units in the evaluation process. Governance is the forum for discussion between the two major stakeholders, faculty and administration, working cooperatively on program evaluation, and it should also be the voice presenting findings to external constituencies such as accrediting bodies. Providing a well-defined set of policies and guidelines for faculty involvement is the first act for governance. The second is constantly discussing the process itself so that the process is based on a shared vision. Governance ensures that the process is open and transparent and that emphasis is placed on improving the programs and not on faculty evaluation or program elimination. When program evaluation is used for evaluation of faculty or program elimination, trust in the process erodes quickly and future program evaluation efforts are thwarted.

XII. What is the role of administration in supporting program evaluation?

An academic program exists within the context of an institution, and it is effective in so far as it contributes to the mission of that institution. Similarly, the institution must be committed to the quality and effectiveness of its programs.

In addition to the organizational setting described earlier, the health and continued vitality of an undergraduate academic program is critically influenced by the quality and continuity of leadership and support that its faculty and students receive from the administration of the campus, starting at the level of the president. Furthermore, the institution's leadership plays an important role in fostering a climate that supports norms of collegiality and continuous improvement and makes clear the implications and consequences of not improving. Consequently, administrators also have a need for training as evaluators on the issues that follow, which may also be included in program evaluation self-studies.

- Effective ways in which the administration encourages and supports program review
- How the leadership helps to create an environment and a climate for academic excellence
- Fairness of the reward structure of the institution and the program
- Ways by which the administration empowers faculty and students
- How budget decisions and resource allocation processes reflect the concern for quality programs and support academic robustness
- Creation of an organizational chart that shows the relationship of the program to the rest of the institution
- How the program is represented in the institution's governance bodies and planning processes
- Faculty development and support efforts by administration in the program area

XII. How do technology and library information resources support programs and their evaluations?

This edition of the guide is being produced in 2010-11, when we are in the midst of a continuing and rapid revolution in computer and communications technology. At the risk of sounding quaint in a few years, here are a few recent examples of this revolution: social networking (Facebook, blogs); cloud computing (Google Apps, Microsoft Live@EDU); powerful mobile devices (iPad, Kindle); electronic publication of journals and books.

Imperative: As faculty we need to keep pace with new developments in information and communications technology and challenge our students to put the technology to good use.

At the same time we are committed to sustaining and advancing important academic practices including reading, writing, critical thinking, independent discovery of information sources, and participation in the discourse of our respective disciplines. These practices constitute information literacy. The materials and tools for these practices are gradually migrating into digital forms, but otherwise there is nothing new about them. What has changed is that we cannot assume that our students will absorb these practices in the same way we did.

Imperative: As faculty we need to teach these basic academic practices with intention in every program.

The imperatives above should be considered in developing the learning goals for a program, in assessing student learning outcomes, and in describing the teaching and learning resources available to faculty and students in the program.

The following excerpt from the Middle States publication, *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*, may be useful.²⁰

Several skills, collectively referred to as “information literacy,” apply to all disciplines in an institution’s curricula. These skills relate to a student’s competency in acquiring and processing information in the search for understanding, whether that information is sought in or through the facilities of a library, through practica, as a result of field experiments, by communications with experts in professional communities, or by other means. Therefore, information literacy is an essential component of any educational program at the undergraduate level. These skills include the ability to:

- determine the nature and extent of needed information;
- access information effectively and efficiently;
- evaluate critically the sources and content of information;
- incorporate selected information in the learner’s knowledge base and value system;
- use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose;
- understand the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and information technology; and
- observe laws, regulations, and institutional policies related to the access and use of information.

²⁰ Middle States Commission on Higher Education. *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation* (12th ed.) Philadelphia, PA, p. 42

XIV. References

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Appendix A

Context for Academic Program Evaluation in the State University of New York

Academic program evaluation within the State University of New York is part of overall institutional assessment processes that are expected to meet the expectations and standards of external stakeholders.

- **The New York State Commissioner of Education.** The regulations of the New York State Commissioner of Education require each registered academic program leading to a degree or other award to have a “reviewing system...to estimate the success of students and faculty in achieving...goals and objectives.”²¹
- **State University of New York.** To promote continuous enhancement of academic quality, University policy requires campuses to conduct academic program evaluations (also called program reviews, or assessment of the major) for each registered academic program on a five-to-seven year cycle, or to participate in programmatic accreditation on a cycle of ten years or less. Each evaluation must include, at minimum, an assessment of student learning and external review.²² Campuses are also expected to assess institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes in general education consistent with University policy.
- **Regional Accreditation.** The scope of regional accreditation is an institution, and all its locations, programs and services. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education expects academic program evaluation to be embedded in an organized institutional assessment process that is supported by administrators, faculty and staff. The process is expected to ensure that the institution:
 - has documented, organized and sustained assessment processes to evaluate and improve academic programs as well as other programs and services;
 - has a process for sharing and discussing assessment results with appropriate constituents and using results in institutional planning, resource allocation and renewal;
 - assesses student learning to demonstrate that students, at graduation, or other appropriate points, have knowledge, skills and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals; and

²¹ Section 52.1(b)(3) of the Regulations of the Commission of Education (8 NYCRR)
http://www.highered.nysed.gov/ocue/title_8_chapter_ii_regulations_o.htm#%C2%A7%2050.1%20Definitions.

²² University-wide Policy and Procedure Library http://www.suny.edu/sunypp/documents.cfm?doc_id=643

- assesses student learning to demonstrate that students are achieving key institutional and program learning outcomes, based on clearly articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes at all levels (institution, program and course) that are aligned with one another and related to institutional effectiveness.²³
- **Programmatic (or Specialized) Accreditation.** Programmatic accreditation focuses on individual programs or groups of programs in a discipline or professional area, such as business, education or engineering. In New York State, academic programs that lead to State professional licensure or educator certification are required to attain programmatic accreditation. Academic programs that do not lead to licensure or certification—in a wide range of fields such as the arts, business, forestry or public administration—voluntarily seek programmatic accreditation as an emblem of quality. Each of the more than sixty programmatic accrediting agencies recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or the U.S. Department of Education, or both, has its own standards and procedures.²⁴ Academic programs and departments that do not seek programmatic accreditation may borrow standards set by accreditation agencies to guide their program evaluations.

²³ Middle States Commission on Higher Education, *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation*, Online Version of March 2009, http://www.msche.org/publications/CHX06_Aug08REVMarch09.pdf

²⁴ <http://www.chea.org/Directories/index.asp>

Appendix B

Institutional and Departmental Characteristics That Support Effective Evaluation

Effective evaluation has been defined as evaluation that *informs*, rather than dictates, judgments of quality that lead to *improved* functioning. Institutions and departments that conduct effective evaluations have at least two characteristics: (1) an organizational and cultural setting that promotes an atmosphere conducive to evaluation; and (2) credibility and fairness of evaluation policies and practices.²⁵

Organizational and cultural setting

- ❑ Institutional leaders engage faculty in evaluation with clearly framed evaluation questions and promote a culture of evidence to inform decision making – rather than adopting a compliance mentality.
- ❑ Responsibility for evaluation is decentralized to the maximum possible extent, so that discussions of quality begin within departments, at the level where they can be most specific and tangible.
- ❑ Departments frame fundamental questions about their programs to give evaluation a focus and purpose, and avoid disconnected sets of information that do not constitute evidence.
- ❑ There a spirit of reflection and continuous improvement based on data, an almost matter-of-fact acceptance of the need for evidence for decision making.
- ❑ Data are shared openly.
- ❑ Departments themselves interpret the data.
- ❑ The department has a culture of peer collaboration and peer review that supports common expectations for students and standards for evaluation.
- ❑ Role differentiation among faculty is respected and valued, so that some faculty are comfortable devoting themselves to the scholarship of teaching and learning.
- ❑ Evaluation has a tangible, visible impact on resource allocation and other key decisions.

Credibility and fairness of evaluation policies and practices

- ❑ Evaluation procedures are organized to fit the culture and mission of the institution.
- ❑ Evaluation procedures are organized to avoid unnecessary duplication.
- ❑ The top administration of the institution promotes a “spirit of inquiry” that encourages faculty to question assumptions, uncover problems and create new meanings without fear of punishment.
- ❑ Evaluation has consequences, with a high level of faculty involvement in, and open discussion about, action plans based on assessment results.
- ❑ Some form of program evaluation is done annually with periodic synthesis, so that it is a standard process rather than a special event.

Appendix C

²⁵ Wergin, J. F. & Swingen, J. N. (2000). *Departmental Assessment: How Some Campuses Are Effectively Evaluating the Collective Work of Faculty*. AAHE.

Characteristics of Effective Evaluations of Academic Programs

Effective academic program evaluations generally have the following characteristics.²⁶ and ²⁷

Goal-oriented

- ☐ The program has a clear statement of goals and student learning outcomes.
- ☐ It engages faculty, students and others in activities designed to lead to those goals and student learning outcomes.

Useful

- ☐ The program evaluation helps faculty and staff make appropriate decisions for improving the program, developing new goals and plans and/or making resource allocations.
- ☐ The evaluation is based on measures and identified performance targets and minimally acceptable results.

Cost-Effective

- ☐ The program evaluation yields benefits that justify the investment made in it, particularly in terms of faculty and staff time.
- ☐ The evaluation focuses on the most important goals.
- ☐ The evaluation is distributed over time.
- ☐ Faculty assemble representative samples of student work within their courses (i.e., embedded assessments) to use as evidence for program evaluation and to minimize costs.

Reasonably accurate and truthful

- ☐ The evaluation is based on reasonably credible and multiple sources of evidence rather than anecdotal information.
- ☐ The evaluation results can be used with confidence.
- ☐ In assessing student learning outcomes, at least one *direct measure* of learning (in contrast to *indirect measures*, such as students' perceptions that they learned) is used.
- ☐ In assessing student learning with samples, the sample should be reasonably representative of all students in, or successfully completing, a course or program.

Planned, organized, systematic and sustained

- ☐ The evaluation clearly and purposefully corresponds to student learning outcomes and other outcomes that it is intended to assess. It meaningfully addresses disappointing outcomes.
- ☐ The evaluation is part of an ongoing cycle of information gathering, analysis and action, rather than a once-and-done event.
- ☐ It is related to important program-level goals that are aligned with institutional goals, and reflected in course-level goals.

²⁶ Middle States Commission on Higher Education, *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation*, Online Version of March 2009
http://www.msche.org/publications/CHX06_Aug08REVMarch09.pdf

²⁷ State University of New York General Education Assessment Review Group

Appendix D

Sample Outline for a Program Self-Study at a SUNY State-Operated Campus

- I. Mission and Learning Outcomes of Undergraduate and Graduate Programs
 - A. The Overarching Mission of the Program
 - B. The Goals and Objectives Associated with Accomplishing Stated Mission
(The goals and objectives should be stated as learning outcomes in undergraduate programs.)
- II. Program Curriculum and Design
 - A. Program Design
 - B. Compare Program with Local Entities and National Standards
 - C. Undergraduate and Graduate Student Experiences in the Program
- III. Undergraduate and Graduate Student Quality
 - A. Acceptance Procedures
 - B. Characteristics of Students
 - C. Program Trends
- IV. Faculty Quality
 - A. Hiring Programs and Number of Faculty
 - B. Faculty Responsibilities
 - C. Tenure and Promotion Policies
- V. Assessment Plan and Outcomes
(Student learning outcomes must be assessed in undergraduate programs.)
 - A. Assessment Plan
 - B. Assessment Results
 - C. Improvement Loop
- VI. Support, Resources, and Facilities
 - A. Present/describe/evaluate a three-year budget summary that differentiates sources of revenue and shows expenditures by major categories (professional staff salaries, non-professional staff salaries, equipment, supplies and expenses, temporary service, graduate assistantships and fellowships, etc.)
 - B. Present/describe/evaluate the adequacy of Departmental facilities on and off campus (offices, internet capacity, class labs, research labs, graduate assistantships and fellowships, etc.)
 - C. Amount and types of resources and facilities needed to accommodate present and anticipated program changes/developments and/or enrollment growth
 - D. The nature, extent and adequacy of library holdings and access to digital equivalents in the programs' field (this information should be requested from the Library(ies) and included as an appendix to the Department's report)

VII. Conclusions

- A. Summary of the strengths, weaknesses, and major achievements in the program
- B. Comment on any discrepancies between an “ideal” and the “current,” as they were conceived and as they actually are operating
- C. Provide a horizon statement describing the outlook for the future (five years and ten years out)

Appendix E

Guidelines for Constructing Rubrics using Criteria

Criterion-based Rating Scales (Rubrics)

What is a rubric? A rubric is a criterion-based rating scale that can be used to evaluate student performance in almost any area. A rubric establishes the “rules” for the assignment (Huba and Freed, 2000). It contains *a priori* criteria for various levels of mastery of an assignment.

How is a rubric used? The person evaluating student performance uses a rubric as the basis for judging performance. Ideally, rubrics are available to students prior to their completion of the assignment so that they have clear expectations about the components of the evaluation and what constitutes exemplary performance.

What are some of the criteria that may be used within a rubric to evaluate student work? Criteria can include sophistication, organization, grammar and style, competence, accuracy, synthesis, analysis, and expressiveness, among others.

What are the components of a rubric? Huba and Freed (2000) describe the following elements of rubrics:

- Levels of mastery (e.g., unacceptable through exemplary)
- Dimensions of quality (see criteria above)
- Organizational groupings (macro categories for criteria)
- Commentaries (the junctures between levels of mastery and dimensions of quality; e.g., a description of the characteristics of an exemplary organization)
- Descriptions of consequences (components of commentaries that relate to real-life settings and situations).

Where can I see examples of rubrics and learn more? Walvoord and Anderson (1998) and Huba and Freed (2000) are both excellent sources of information about the characteristics of rubrics and how to develop them. They also provide examples of various forms of rubrics.

(from *Student Learning Assessment: Options and Resources*, Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2007, p. 43)

Appendix F

Guidelines for Constructing Rubrics using Criteria

This is intended for institutions to use as a tool to help them assess the status of their current assessment efforts in terms of Middle States' accreditation standards and expectations. This tool is **not** intended to be used by any evaluators or to prescribe specific Commission actions regarding the institution.

No plans = **No documented evidence that the institution has plans** to do this.
 No evidence = The institution appears to be aware that it should do this, but there is **no documented evidence that this is happening**.
 A few areas = The institution has documented evidence that this is happening **in just a few areas** (for example, only in programs with specialized accreditation).
 Some areas = The institution has documented evidence—not just assurances—that this is happening **in some but not most areas** (for example, in a number of academic programs but not yet in general education)
 Most areas = The institution has documented evidence—not just assurances—that this is happening **in most but not all areas**.
 Everywhere = The institution has documented evidence—not just assurances—that this is happening **everywhere**.

	<i>For academic programs, the general education curriculum, and institutional goals articulated in the mission statement, vision statement, or elsewhere:</i>	No plans	No evidence	A few areas	Some areas	Most areas	Every-where
1	Institutional leaders demonstrate sustained—not just one-time or periodic—support for promoting an ongoing culture of assessment and for efforts to improve teaching.						
2	Clear statements of expected learning outcomes at the institutional, unit, program, and course levels have been developed and have appropriate interrelationships.						
3	Those with a vested interest in the learning outcomes of the institution, program, or curriculum are involved in developing, articulating, and assessing them.						
4	Statements of program-level expected learning outcomes are made available to current and prospective students.						
5	Course syllabi include statements of expected learning outcomes.						
6	Targets or benchmarks for determining whether student learning outcomes have been achieved have been established and justified; the justifications demonstrate that the targets are of appropriate college-level rigor and are appropriate given the institution's mission.						
7	Multiple measures of student learning, including direct evidence, have been collected and are of sufficient quality that they can be used with confidence to make appropriate decisions.						
8	The evidence of student learning that has been collected is clearly linked to expected learning outcomes.						
9	Student learning assessment results have been shared in useful forms and discussed with appropriate constituents, including those who can effect change.						

10	Student learning assessment results have been used to improve teaching and by institutional leaders to inform planning and budgeting decisions.						
11	In any areas in which the above are not yet happening, concrete, feasible, and timely plans are in place.						
12	Assessment processes have been reviewed and changes have been made to improve their effectiveness and/or efficiency, as appropriate.						
13	There is sufficient engagement, momentum, and simplicity in current assessment practices to provide assurance that assessment processes will be sustained indefinitely.						

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