**Purpose of this rubric:** This form provides programs with structured and useful *feedback* about the strengths and weaknesses of their assessment practices that will enable them to improve their assessment plans. It does not evaluate the program itself or students’ performance, but rather focuses on describing assessment best practices and helping UWM programs understand how to achieve them. It can be used as a self-assessment, or as a guide for designing a comprehensive learning assessment plan.

This form was developed to reflect best practices drawn from assessment scholarship and as defined by the [Excellence in Assessment](https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/eia/#1564757844635-6122e727-b34d) designation sponsored by the National Institute of Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), and the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA).

**Reviewers:** This feedback form has been completed and reviewed by staff from Academic Affairs and the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research. A copy will be stored as part of this program’s assessment record for this academic year. Programs are invited to include their own comments or observations in the space below, and return it to learning-assessment@uwm.edu.

**Definitions:** Assessment, as understood for accreditation, is a process of gathering, interpreting, and responding to evidence of student learning and experience in light of program and strategic goals. The purpose of assessment is to enable faculty to identify strengths and weaknesses of the program in light of programmatic learning outcomes, to facilitate program improvement. The assessment of student learning is a component of program evaluation as required by the campus APCC and by our regional accreditor, the [Higher Learning Commission](https://www.hlcommission.org/Policies/criteria-and-core-components.html#4).

**HLC Criterion 4b:** The institution engages in **ongoing** assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.

1. The institution has **effective** processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.

2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to **improve** student learning.

3. The institution’s processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect **good practice**, including the **substantial participation** of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

For more information, visit the [HLC webpage](https://www.hlcommission.org/Policies/criteria-and-core-components.html#4).

*Revised: 7/5/24*

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| **Summary:** |
| **Degree Program:** Click here to enter text.  | **Date of Review:**  Click here to enter text.  |
| *Required Changes (to meet HLC Minimum/Expected Practices):* | *Recommendations (to better align with best practices):* |
|  |  |
| Program Response, comments: (optional) |
|  |
| **Available Resources for Program Assessment:** | **Can help with:**  |
| Online resources: <http://www.uwm.edu/assessment> | * Understanding assessment basics
* Seeing examples from other UWM programs
* UG and G assessment QuickGuides
* Handouts, forms, and links to other resources
 |
| Contact: learning-assessment@uwm.edu   | * Developing new learning outcomes or a new assessment plan
* Reviewing or improving rubrics or other measures
* Finding efficiencies, such as embedded assessments, to reduce assessment labor
* Developing or improving indirect measures such as exit surveys, focus groups, or student interviews
* Developing assessment projects to delve into a specific questions (e.g., measuring the efficacy of a new curriculum or the effect of different pathways through the major on student learning)
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| **Components of the Assessment Plan:** | **Best Practices** | **HLC Minimum/****Expected Practices** | **Feedback** |
| **Program Learning Outcomes**As evidenced by: Program Learning Outcomes as documented in the archives or in the Learning Outcomes tab in the UWM Catalog (catalog.uwm.edu). | * Program Learning Outcomes make explicit what *graduating* students from the program should know or be able to do.
* They are student focused (“Students will…”).
* They use carefully selected verbs (*identify, describe, interpret, analyze, apply, design, etc.*).
* They are empirically measurable or observable.
* For more information, see: [Guidelines for Effective Program Learning Outcomes](https://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2023/09/Guidelines-for-Effective-Program-Learning-Outcomes.pdf)

Ex.: *“Students will plan and carry out an ethnographic research project, including choosing an appropriate research subject, engaging in participant observation, interviewing informants, and keeping field notes.”* | **All UWM degree programs *must* have clearly stated learning outcomes** that are measurable or observable, and which make explicit what graduating students from the program should know or be able to do.  |  |
| **Curriculum Map**As evidenced by: Documentation included with the assessment plan.*See the “*[*A Curriculum Map*](https://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2020/06/A-Curriculum-Map.pdf)*” handout.* | * [Curriculum maps](https://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2020/06/A-Curriculum-Map.pdf) differ from a course of study in that they make explicit the reason why particular courses are required *vis-à-vis* program learning outcomes.
* The map includes *required* courses in the course of study for the degree.
* It makes explicit in which courses *each* program learning outcome is first introduced to students, is subsequently developed, and in which course(s) students are expected to demonstrate full mastery or proficiency.
* It makes identifies courses where assessment data will be collected.
 | **Strongly recommended**, not required. HLC reviewers regard curriculum maps as a best practice, and look to them as evidence that a program is intentionally designed to facilitate student learning.  |  |

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| **Components of the Assessment Plan:** | **Best Practices** | **HLC Minimum/****Expected Practices** | **Feedback** |
| **Alignment**As evidenced by: Measures, outcomes, goals, and alignments (UWS Shared Goals) documented with the assessment plan. | * Course content, course-level outcomes, assignments, and assessments should logically correspond to the program outcomes they fulfill.
* Program outcomes should logically correspond to program and institutional learning goals ([UWS Shared Learning Goals](https://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2020/02/Shared-Learning-Goals.pdf)).
* Relationships between assessments, coursework, program outcomes, and institutional goals, and the program’s mission are explicit and clear to students.
* Course alignment can only be reviewed by examining syllabi and course learning outcomes.

Ex.:  *See the “Understanding Alignment”* [*handout*](https://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2020/06/Understanding-Alignment.pdf)*.* | Institutional learning goals can only be assessed through programs and courses. Alignment is essential for that process to work: undergraduate programs should **make explicit how program learning outcomes align with the institution’s learning goals** ([UWS Shared Learning Goals](https://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2020/02/Shared-Learning-Goals.pdf)). Not all program outcomes must correspond to UWS Shared Goals, but some should.  |  |
| **Measures/****Evidence Gathered**As evidenced by: Measures documented in the assessment plan. | * All outcomes have associated measures.
* Each outcome is assessed separately (i.e., no lumped measures like course grades).
* Evidence gathered is a *valid* measure of student achievement for the outcome being assessed.
* Evidence gathered includes both direct(e.g., rubric scores, exam scores, etc.) and indirectmeasures (e.g., exit surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.).
* Evidence is sufficiently detailed to capture *patterns* of strength or weakness in student performance (e.g., at least four levels of performance for improvement-oriented data).
 | HLC requires at least one **direct measure** for each outcome, and that assessment methodologies reflect “good practice.” Indirect measures are strongly recommended, but not required.  |  |

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| **Components of the Assessment Plan:** | **Best Practices** | **HLC Minimum/****Expected Practices** | **Feedback** |
| **Benchmarks and Targets**As evidenced by: Benchmarks and targets documented in the assessment plan. | * Benchmarks (score cutoffs) are set to reflect the minimum acceptable degree of proficiency or achievement for a student graduating from the program, as determined by faculty.
* Secondary benchmarks reflect the ideal degree of proficiency or achievement for a student graduating from the program, as determined by faculty.
* Targets (the expected % of students hitting each benchmark) are set by faculty to reflect the minimum % of students they want to see hitting each benchmark in order for them to consider their program to be succeeding in its educational mission.
* Secondary benchmarks should also have targets, and *will often be the most useful datapoint for identifying areas of improvement.*

Ex.: *“90% of students will score at least a 2, while 75% will score a 3 or higher.”*  | The use of benchmarks and targets to interpret most assessment data is “good practice.” **At least one benchmark and one target should be provided** for each direct measure.  |  |

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| **Components of the Assessment Plan:** | **Best Practices** | **HLC Minimum/****Expected Practices** | **Reviewer Feedback** |
| **Interpretation****/Response**As evidenced by: Faculty Interpretation/Response or meeting minutes where assessment data has been discussed, as documented in the program’s assessment data reports. | * Assessment results are shared with relevant faculty and other instructional staff in formats that are accessible to them.
* Assessment results are explained and understood in context, with the significance of the data being determined by those best positioned to interpret it (i.e., faculty and other instructional staff involved in the program).
* The faculty interpretation is documented with the assessment data.
* Where appropriate, action plans have been created with input from relevant stakeholders.
 | HLC reviewers look for evidence that assessment results have been **used** to improve student learning, which necessarily requires that data be accompanied by analysis and interpretation.  |  |
| **Action Plans**As evidenced by: Action plans documented in the program’s assessment data reports. | * Action plans respond to assessment data with meaningful programmatic changes to curriculum, course of study, policy, advising, pedagogy, professional development, or even changes to the learning outcomes or assessment plan itself.
* Action plans specify what the changes are, who will implement them and follow up, and how the changes will be evaluated (in future assessment cycles) to determine if they were successful or not.
* Action plan contains a clear timeline.
 | HLC *requires* evidence that assessment is actively **used** to improve student learning.The absence of documented changes or responses to assessment data often means the data being collected is insufficient. Alternatively, it can mean the program is not adequately documenting the work it is doing. |  |
| **Components of the Assessment Plan:** | **Best Practices** | **HLC Minimum/****Expected Practices** | **Feedback** |
| **Wide Participation in the Assessment Process**As evidenced by: Meeting minutes where assessment data has been discussed or other documentation submitted. | * Wide range of stakeholders, including faculty, instructional academic staff, and students are involved in developing and implementing assessment plans, and in reviewing and responding to assessment results.
* For some programs, the inclusion of community stakeholders is appropriate.
 | HLC requires evidence that program assessment processes include the “**substantial participation** of faculty and other instructional staff members.” The inclusion of other stakeholders, including students and relevant members of the community, is a best practice but not required.  |  |
| **Transparency & Reporting**(For more information, see NILOA’s [Transparency Framework](https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/ourwork/transparency-framework/).) As evidenced by: Data reported, and program information available on the website.  | * Assessment results are submitted annually, including sufficient context and information (i.e., sample sizes, methods used, # and % meeting each benchmark).
* Learning Outcomes are prominently posted on program catalog pages (catalog.uwm.edu).
* Program assessment plans clearly define measures and are available and accessible to students and the public.
* Results of assessment are made available and accessible to various stakeholders, including students.
* Action plans or program changes resulting from assessment are communicated to relevant stakeholders.
 | HLC **requires** thorough annual documentation of program assessment work, results, and faculty responses/action plans. Public or student facing disclosure of learning outcomes, assessment plans, results, and program responses is a r**ecommended** best practice, not required. NILOA, the AAC&U (through the Excellence in Assessment designation), and VSA have endorsed the Transparency Framework as best practice.  |  |

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| **Components of the Assessment Plan:** | **Best Practices** | **HLC Minimum/****Expected Practices** | **Feedback** |
| **Overall**As evidenced by: Reviewer impressions, based on all available evidence. | * The assessment plan produces useful, actionable data.
* The assessment plan is reasonable, able to be carried out with the available time, labor, and resources.
* The assessment plan is carried out consistently, on an ongoing basis.
* The assessment plan is meaningful rather than perfunctory, allowing faculty to identify and dig into issues about student learning that they care about.
 | HLC requires “**ongoing** assessment,” meaning that all outcomes are assessed at least once every five years, with at least one outcome being assessed per year.  |  |