Program Quality Assessment

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Council of Graduate Schools
New Deans Institute

Marquette University

- **Medium Sized Private Catholic University**
  - 11,500 students
- **3549 Graduate and Professional Students**
  - 39 Master's Programs
  - 16 Ph.D. Programs
  - 4 Professional Doctoral Programs
  - 31 Certificate Programs
- Marquette is classified as a doctoral research institution with high research

Two Components of Evaluation

- **Assessment**
  - The purpose of assessment is to improve student learning

- **Program Review**
  - The purpose of program review is the improvement of graduate programs

Assessment and Program Review go Hand-in-Hand

Both can be linked to improve program quality

The Political Climate of Assessment

- Disciplinary Accrediting Bodies
- Regional Accrediting Bodies
- The U.S. News and World Report Rankings
- The National Research Council
- The Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act

Disciplinary Accrediting Bodies

- Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
- Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication,
- Commission on Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association
- Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology
- American Bar Association and Association of American Law Schools
- Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Instruction
- American Psychological Association
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
- National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences
- Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant
- American Physical Therapy Association
- American Society of Exercise Physiology
- National Athletic Training Association Board of Credentialing

Regional Accrediting Agencies

NWCCU

EASC

MSCHE

HLC -North Central-

WASC

SACS
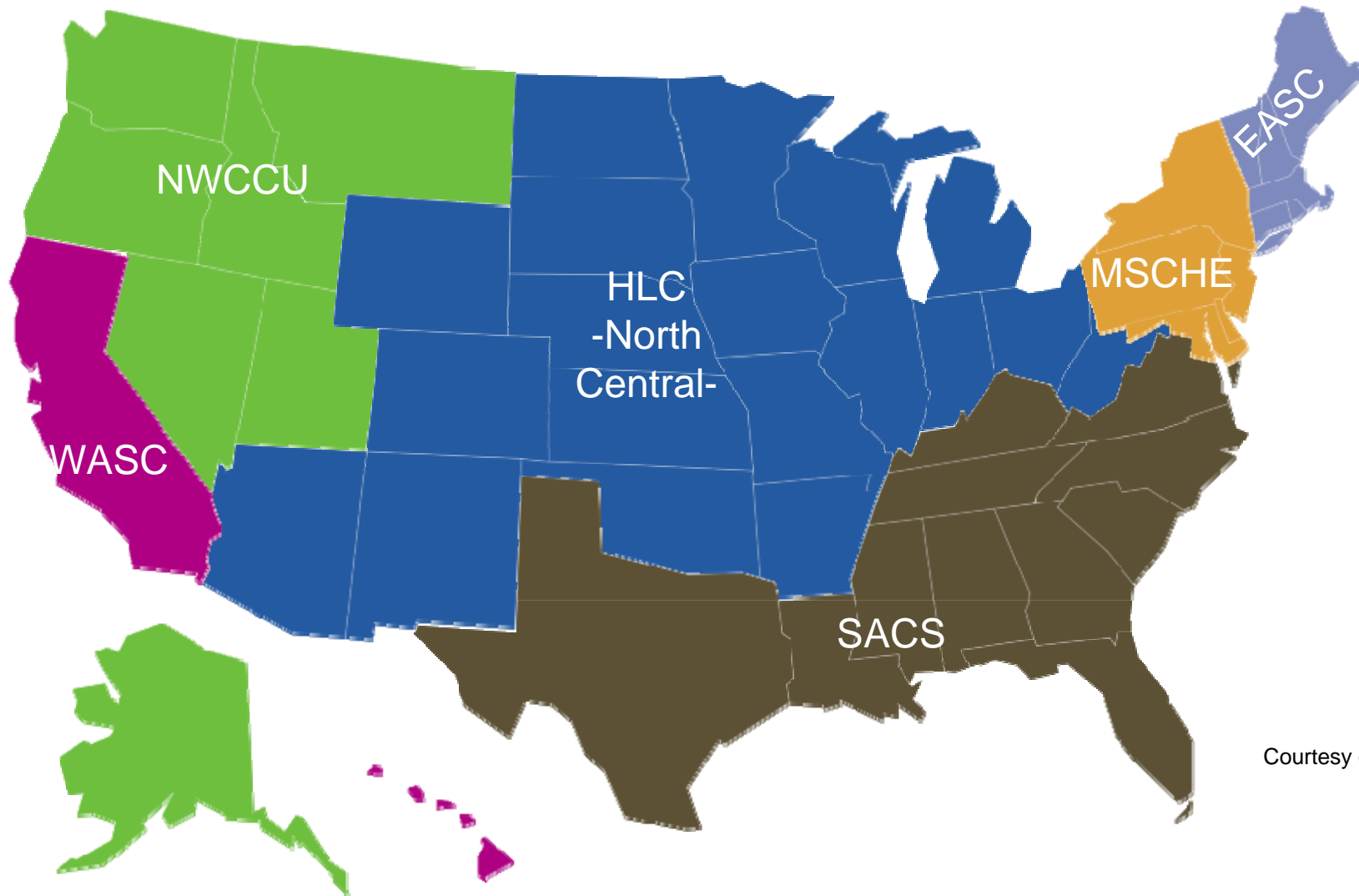
Courtesy of HLC

U.S. News and World Report Graduate Program Rankings

- Weightings (in most programs 100% based on Peer Assessment)
- When data are considered the ratio is 60% from data and 40% from peer assessment
  - Peer assessment: 40%
    - 25% from school officers
    - 15% from employers
  - Placement success: 20 to 35%
  - Student selectivity: 10 to 25%
  - Faculty resources: 0 to 25%
  - Research activity: 0 to 30%

NRC Study

- Process
  - Collection of the Program List
  - Collection of names of faculty, names of candidacy students, institutional data, faculty data, and student data
  - Administration of the Rating Questionnaire
- Methodology Guide
- Tookit from CGS

Assessment

Assessment

- **Definition:** the systematic collection of information about student learning in order to inform decisions about how to improve learning

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- It is a type of "**action research**" used to inform local action.

- It does not necessarily require standardized tests or "objective measures." One can assess critical thinking, scientific reasoning, or other qualities by making informed professional judgments

Where did Assessment Come from?

- Universities have always engaged in informal assessment

- 1990 in *Scholarship Reconsidered*, encouraged quality teaching.

- In 1992 the federal government required accrediting agencies to include student learning outcomes as part of accreditation.

- In 1993 The Wingspread Group on Higher Education called for putting student learning first.

- In 2005 in the publication of The Responsive Ph.D. emphasized as one of its four principles, conducting assessment with reasonable consequences

The Political Climate

After Escaping the Imposition of Standardized Measures in 2007, Colleges Begin Worrying About 2008

By PAUL BASKEN

Washington

Congress rescued the nation's colleges and accreditors last year when the Bush administration threatened to impose new rules for measuring academic success. At an annual conference here this week, accreditors heard repeated warnings that the danger has not passed.

Members of Congress are still "asking questions about how tens of billions of dollars are being spent" by colleges, Sen. Lamar Alexander, Republican of Tennessee, said Wednesday at the conference, organized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, the nation's main umbrella group for accrediting agencies.

College leaders "need to do a much better job of helping their individual congressmen or senators understand the answers," said Senator Alexander, a former U.S. secretary of education who now stands as a leading ally of higher education on Capitol Hill.

'Guiding Principles' for Disclosure

Representatives of colleges and their accrediting agencies took one step in that direction by issuing a statement at the conference setting out a series of general guidelines for helping the public better understand their achievements.

Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act

- Requirement for accountability and assessment

- 200 new regulations/Consumer website

- Important changes
  - Transfer Policies – must be publically disclosed by university
  - Institutional Appeal – must provide the right to legal representation when university denied
  - Verification of Student Identity – to reduce the risk of fraudulent identity in distance education
  - Student Growth – monitoring enrollment growth data
  - Approval of Certificate Programs – if 50% of courses are not a part of an existing program

Five Basic Steps in Assessment

Step One

- **Document departmental goals for student learning**
- Articulate the student learning outcome statements (what the student will be able to do upon completion)
- Gather evidence on performance
  - Direct measures
  - Indirect measures
- Use a rubric to evaluate how well goals are being met
- Use the information for improvement

Step One Example: Departmental Goals

- Acquire advanced knowledge and a deeper understanding of the skills and knowledge in the discipline

- Develop a sense of responsibility towards, as well as an understanding of the ethical dimensions of the discipline

- Develop the competence, knowledge, and independence for the realization of leadership potential

- Other goals specific to the discipline

Step Two

- Document departmental goals for student learning
- **Articulate the student learning outcome statements (what the student will be able to do upon completion)**
- Gather evidence on performance
  - Direct measures
  - Indirect measures
- Use a rubric to evaluate how well goals are being met
- Use the information for improvement

Step Two:
Student Learning Outcomes

- The goals must be operationalized into learning outcome statements within the context of the discipline

- The statements should describe the attitudes, behaviors, skills, and ways of thinking

Example: Learning Outcomes

- **At the completion of the degree in communication, the graduate will be able to:**
  - 1. Communicate effectively in both oral and written format during capstone experience.
  - 2. Articulate the historical, theoretical and methodological foundations of the discipline of communication.
  - 3. Apply research-based, theory-informed knowledge of the field to solve real-life problems in a variety of work or community settings.
  - 4. Apply ethical decision making skills in a variety of communication situations.
  - 5. Integrate knowledge from theory, methods, and ethics from the discipline of communication to a particular specialization
  - 6. Design and execute an original thesis research project.

Step Three

- Document departmental goals for student learning
- Articulate the student learning outcome statements (what the student will be able to do upon completion)
- **Gather evidence on performance**
  - **Direct measures**
  - **Indirect measures**
- Use a rubric to evaluate how well goals are being met
- Use the information for improvement

Step Three: Gather Evidence

Direct Measures

- Courses – papers, projects, original work
- Comprehensive examinations
- GRE General test and subject test
- Certification examinations
- Licensure examinations
- Locally developed pretest and/or posttest
- Portfolios with evidence of learning
- Audio or videotapings
- Thesis/dissertations
- Peer-reviewed publications
- Disciplinary presentations
- Funded grants and fellowships

Indirect Measures

- Benchmarking with peer institutions
- Career Placements
- Employer Surveys
- Advisory groups on curriculum development
- Student Graduation/retention rates
- Exit interviews
- Student satisfaction surveys
- Focus Groups
- Alumni surveys
- Alumni honors
- Analysis of grade distributions
- Peer review of courses and programs

Step Four

- Document departmental goals for student learning
- Articulate the student learning outcome statements (what the student will be able to do upon completion)
- Gather evidence on performance
  - Direct measures
  - Indirect measures
- **Use a rubric to evaluate how well goals are being met**
- Use the information for improvement

Step Four: Use a Rubric

- Provides in writing various clear and explicit criteria for evaluation of student work

- Changes professional judgment into numerical ratings on a scale

- Allows comparison among various faculty across courses

Example Communication Rubric

	1	2	3	4	Total
Organization	Audience cannot understand presentation because there is no sequence of information.	Audience has difficulty following presentation because student jumps around	Student presents information in logical sequence which audience can follow.	Student presents information in logical, interesting sequence which audience can follow.	
Subject Knowldedge	Student does not have grasp of information; student cannot answer questions about subject.	Student is uncomfortable with information and is able to answer only rudimentary questions.	Student is at ease with expected answers to all questions but fails to elaborate.	Student demonstrates full knowledge (more than required) by answering all class questions with explanations and elaborations.	
Graphics	Student uses superfluous graphics or no graphics	Student occasionally uses graphics that rarely support text and presentation.	Student's graphics relate to text and presentation.	Student's graphics explain and reinforce screen text and presentation.	
Mechanics	Student's presentation has four or more spelling errors and/or grammatical errors.	Presentation has three misspellings and/or grammatical errors.	Presentation has no more than two misspellings and/or grammatical errors.	Presentation has no misspellings or grammatical errors.	
Eye Contact	Student reads all of the report with no eye contact.	Student occasionally uses eye contact, but still reads most of report.	Student maintains eye contact most of the time but frequently returns to notes.	Student maintains eye contact with audience, seldom returning to notes.	
Elocution	Student mumbles, incorrectly pronounces terms, and speaks too quietly for students in back of the class to hear.	Student's voice is low. Student incorrectly pronounces terms. Audience members	Student's voice is clear. Student pronounces most words correctly. Most audience members can hear presentation.	Student uses a clear voice and correct, precise pronunciation of terms audience members can hear presentation.	

Created by Lee Bash, Higher Learning Commission Presentation

Step Five

- Document departmental goals for student learning
- Articulate the student learning outcome statements (what the student will be able to do upon completion)
- Gather evidence on performance
  - Direct measures
  - Indirect measures
- Use a rubric to evaluate how well goals are being met
- **Use the information for improvement**

Step Five: Closing the Feedback Loop (Spiral)

- Assessment is only helpful if it is used to strengthen student learning
  - How/what did the program change as a result of assessment?
  - How did or will the changes improve student learning

Example:

- Student lack of quantitative skills in understanding graphs, charts, and numerical concepts
  - Embedding Math Across the Curriculum

Graduate Core Competencies

- Graduate education doesn't have general education courses or a core curriculum

  - Therefore <u>is it possible</u> to have GRADUATE CORE LEARNING OUTCOMES?
  - Are there outcomes that are common across all graduate programs?

Possible Graduate CORE Learning Outcomes

- Communicate the history of the discipline
- Demonstrate a mastery of the theory that underlies the foundation of the discipline
- Demonstrate a mastery of the methodology and techniques specific to the discipline
- Demonstrate proficiency in oral and written communication within the field of study
- Demonstrate a mastery of research, scholarship, and critical evaluation within the field of study
- Demonstrate creative or innovative activity within the field of study
- Function as a professional and a steward of the discipline
- Demonstrate a mastery of professional ethics and/or research ethics

Procedural Items to be Addressed in Assessment Planning

- Who will be responsible for administration of the assessment plan
- What are the resources and structures for assessment
- Who are the targeted students (population vs. sample)
- When will the student assessments be conducted and repeated
- How is assessment data to be used for improvement of learning
- What are the recommended changes to improve the assessment mechanism

Program Reviews

Purpose of Program Reviews

- Formative evaluation rather than summative
- Continuous program improvement
- Data driven and outcome based
- Evaluative and not simply descriptive
- Meeting need for accountability
  - Disciplinary accrediting bodies
  - Regional accrediting bodies

Methods of Program Review

- ## At Marquette:
  - The Graduate Dean coordinates each program review
  - All reviews must involve the college or school administration
  - Program reviews should occur every six years
  - Departments must complete a self study guide
  - Faculty from other universities serve as reviewers
  - Programs that have outside accreditation may have program reviews prior to accreditation visits or may substitute accreditation visit for the program review
  - An approved action plan must be a required outcome of the review
  - Annual progress toward action plan must be reported
- ## Now Looking at Annual Program Profiles

What to Look For in Graduate Programs

Quality Indicators

- **University Environment:**
  - Course offerings should be sufficient to permit students to complete their coursework within two years.
  - Adequate physical plant to house the program should be provided which includes classroom space, clinical space, laboratories, faculty offices, and student areas.
  - Sufficient library resources need to exist to support the program.
  - In doctoral programs, there should be enough financial assistance for a sufficient number of students to engage in full-time study.

Quality Indicators

- **Program Faculty:**
  - The ratio of students to faculty should allow adequate guidance and interaction including having enough faculty to direct dissertations and theses without overburdening faculty.
  - There should be a sufficient number of research active faculty who can serve as advisors for their students.
  - Faculty should have a strong record of scholarship and research which can include external grants, patents, journal articles, monographs, books, invited scholarly activities, and other peer reviewed activities.

Quality Indicators

- **Students:**
  - There should be a demonstrated and well-documented need for graduate prepared professionals in the discipline of the program.
  - The departments must have an active recruitment program with adequate resources to allow funds for printed materials and attendance at conferences for recruitment.
  - There should be a critical mass of students to generate a program identity, richness of discussion, collegial activity, and ensure a sufficient number of graduates.
  - There should be a sufficient pool of well qualified diverse students who desire the degree and meet the admissions criteria (i.e. high GPA and good test scores).

Quality Indicators

- **Curriculum:**
  - There should be a carefully planned and systematic program of study with a clear degree plan, but which allows flexibility to meet individual needs.
  - The curriculum should contain advanced courses and seminars as well as the usual foundational courses.
  - The curriculum should include research tools courses/activities appropriate to the discipline (i.e. statistics, language, methods courses) that prepare students to generate new knowledge or to practice successfully.
  - Programs must have an acceptable assessment plan that identifies student learning outcomes and where relevant meet the requirements of external programmatic accrediting bodies.
  - Programs must have a rich academic environment that provides extra and co-curricular activities to acculturate students into their discipline.

Quality Indicators

- **Program Outcomes:**
  - In those fields where funding is available, programs should seek external research funding that includes support for post doctoral fellows and research assistants.
  - Students should be making reasonable progress toward graduation with time-to-degree so that they are at or near the national average for the discipline.
  - The attrition rate within the program should not exceed the national average for the discipline.
  - Graduates of Ph.D. progrtams the should produce impactful scholarship as evidenced by citation indexes, invited presentations, and other measures of productivity.
  - The placement record of the department should demonstrate that students are hired into meaningful employment in business, practice, research, or in tenure track positions in colleges and universities.

Helpful Resources

- Walvoord B.E. *Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

- Suskie, L. Assessing Student Learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

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- Palomba, C.A., and Banta, T.W. (eds). *Assessing Student Competence in Accredited Disciplines: Pioneering Approaches to Assessment in Higher Education.* Sterling, VA: Stylus 2001.

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Questions and Answers: