

**LONGWOOD UNIVERSITY  
POLICY ON UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES & ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE FOR ASSESSMENT (ACA)**

**I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish a comprehensive, university-wide program of assessment. It includes a policy that regulates the University's assessment activities, an organizational body that ensures the implementation of the policy, and a calendar that incorporates the assessment activities at departmental, divisional, and university levels.

**II. APPLICABILITY**

**A. SCOPE**

This policy applies to all divisions, colleges and departments that constitute the operations of the University.

**B. ELIGIBILITY**

Everyone who is employed by the University to perform assigned duties/tasks is eligible under this policy.

**C. RESPONSIBILITY**

The Provost, vice presidents, associate and assistant vice presidents, deans, department chairs, directors, coordinators, and supervisors are jointly responsible for implementing this policy.

**III. POLICY**

**A. The Principles, Purpose, and Focus of Assessment**

Longwood University (Longwood) has the responsibility to (a) assess student learning outcomes to determine the quality of its curriculum and educational processes in equipping students with the capacity to become productive citizens; (b) assess the quality of the learning environment to ensure improved retention and graduation rates; and (c) assess support services that enhance student learning and satisfaction in order to improve institutional effectiveness and performance across all areas.

The purpose of conducting systematic assessment at Longwood is to create an environment that fosters student learning, development, and success. This is accomplished through an ongoing process of quality enhancement in academic programs, educational support services, and administrative services.

At Longwood, assessment concentrates on student learning outcomes and the effectiveness of services that support student learning and faculty teaching inside and outside of classrooms.

In alignment with the requirements of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), the core competency assessment at Longwood reports student learning outcomes in six areas. These areas are:

- (1) Written communication,
- (2) Oral communication,
- (3) Critical thinking,
- (4) Scientific reasoning,
- (5) Quantitative reasoning, and
- (6) To be determined.

These competency measures, when fully realized, will ensure that Longwood students possess essential knowledge and skills in college-level studies, a breadth of knowledge in humanities/fine arts, social /behavioral sciences and natural science/mathematics, and specialized knowledge of the major fields. Regardless of the specifics of each major, these six competency measures serve as guide posts that lead to an integrated, comprehensive, and coherent assessment. Additionally, adequate data collection on these competency measures provides a foundation for various assessment reports that are regularly required by national, regional, state, and specialized professional accreditation (SPA) agencies.

Periodically, the University assesses its customer satisfaction in both academic and non-academic services. The target areas include: (a) student progression through the institution, (b) students' satisfaction with their university experiences, (c) the quality and efficacy of a unit operation and services, and (d) the institutional environment and climate. The instruments used to facilitate the assessment include, but are not limited to,

- Course Evaluations
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
- CIRP Freshman survey (CIRP)
- ACUHO-I/EBI resident survey
- Survey of Graduating Seniors
- Entry Survey of Graduate Students
- Exit Survey of Graduate Students
- Survey of Employers
- College Student Inventory (CSI)
- Student Satisfaction Inventory
- Alumni Survey
- National College Health Assessment Survey
- Customer services surveys designed by various service units.

While recognizing the importance of using core competency measures (see above) as guide posts for conducting assessment, it is equally important to confirm that,

- For the academic programs, the determination of intended learning outcomes, identification of appropriate measures, and decisions about the sequence and type of assessment activities (such as assignments, testing, etc.) are largely the responsibility of the leadership of the colleges, the library, the Honors program, the general education program, and the departments that offer majors;
- For the service units, the activity-based and service-centered process is designed to determine how well a given unit has delivered the intended services and met its goals/objectives, and how the unit will improve its performance by “closing the loop;” and
- At the center of the assessment is the intent to systematically measure and estimate the impact that Longwood programs and services have on student growth while attending the University.

B. The Organizational Structure for Assessment

At Longwood, the organizational structure for assessment includes four major components: (1) Advisory Committee for Assessment (ACA), (2) Office of Assessment and Institutional Research (OAIR), (3) chain of reporting, and (4) a multi-level assessment process.

- **ACA** is a standing committee established by the President Cabinet and approved by the President. The President of the University appoints the committee chair or co-chairs. The members who serve on the ACA include divisional chief administrative officers or their designees and appointees with assessment expertise.

The primary function of the ACA is to coordinate the university-wide assessment activity, promote effective communication, and support divisional and departmental assessments with advice and liaison services. Annually, ACA will host a one-day assessment retreat to: (a) reflect on assessment practice, (b) exchange ideas about assessment, (c) promote “best practices” in assessment, and (d) provide workshop(s) on assessment.

- **OAIR** operates mainly under the leadership of the Provost and functions as coordinator, facilitator, and consultant for the university-wide assessment activities. Utilizing a systematic assessment management program, OAIR monitors the progress in the university-wide assessment data collection and reporting. In addition, OAIR conducts studies and surveys to assess student learning outcomes as well as the level of student satisfaction with services in response to requests from various external and internal agencies.

- **The chain of reporting** falls into one of the following three categories:
  - For academic units, the report flows from department > college > OAIR
  - For non-academic units, the report flows from department > division > OAIR
  - Quarterly the ACA chairperson updates members of the Executive Council (EC), the President, and the Provost on the progress of the university-wide assessment and makes recommendation(s) on future improvement.

The recommended format of assessment report (Appendix I) consists of two parts: an executive summary (1-2 pages) which highlights achievements and areas needing improvement, and a five-column table that specifically demonstrates linkage to the institutional strategic plan goal(s) and divisional/departmental missions through:

- Unit goal(s) – (column 1)
- Intended learning outcome(s) or service outcome(s) – (column 2)
- Target performance level (assessment tools and measures of success – column 3)
- Level of Achievement (supporting data – column 4)
- Closing the loop (action plan - column 5).

Despite the utility of hard copy documentation for each assessment unit, an electronic form of data collection and reporting is a “must” and not “optional.”

- **The multi--level assessment processes** involve activities that are conducted at the divisional, departmental, and office levels.

At the divisional level, assessment is one of many activities of the division’s operation. It is conducted under the leadership of the Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Public Safety, Administration and Finance, Facility Management and Real Property, Information and Instructional Technology Services, and Institutional Advancement, respectively.

At the departmental/program level, assessment is conducted under the leadership of the chairperson or director of the department/program. Both the assessment plan and report must be reviewed and approved by the respective college deans, graduate dean, and/or vice presidents.

At the course/office level, conducting assessment is the responsibility of faculty/staff members who are performing the duties and tasks that fulfill the commitment of serving the students and other members of the Longwood community. The specifications of the assessment components and methods will vary. For instance, for academic programs, assessing the

student learning outcomes is embedded in the coursework. The commonly shared characteristics of the course design include:

- Course purpose and general expectations
- Expected learning-outcomes: the knowledge, skills and dispositions to be learned from the course
- Actions (such as test and assignment) to be taken to achieve the expected learning-outcomes
- Required reading and other materials
- Measurements or criteria (such as rubric) used to assess student learning
- Expectations for student engagement and behaviors
- Use of results for improvement by incorporation of data analysis results into teaching strategies.

The assessment of non-academic programs is conducted by various offices. While recognizing the variation in service components, there are some common threads in reporting the assessment activities. They are:

- Target population of the services
- Scope of (or activities that constitute) the services
- Responsiveness to customer requests
- Customer feedback on the services
- Data collection/analysis/report on the services
- Use of results for improvement by incorporation of data analysis results into service strategies.

### C. Calendar for Assessment

Unlike the strategic planning that follows a five-year cycle, Longwood assessment planning and reporting is an annual activity. The suggested time line for this activity is either mid-May (before the end of faculty contracts) or mid-August (before the beginning of the fall semester).

During the one-day “assessment retreat,” the respective units are responsible for

- Assessing the extent to which a given unit achieved its goals and delivered the intended outcomes,
- Using the results of the assessment to identify the areas that need improvement,
- Developing an assessment plan that includes identification of at least three intended outcomes and measures of the outcomes for the upcoming year to close the loop.

#### **IV. EXPECTED RESULTS**

This policy will allow the University (1) to monitor its operation at all levels, (2) to systematically measure the extent to which the intended outcomes have been achieved, and (3) to identify the areas that need further improvement.

#### **V. EXCEPTIONS AND DEVIATIONS**

Unless recommended by the Cabinet and approved by the President, there are no exceptions or deviations from conducting assessment according to the calendar.

#### **VI. DEFINITIONS**

**Operational year:** An Operational Year may be defined as either an Academic Year (August to May), Fiscal Year (July to June), or regular calendar year (January to December). The specification depends on the functionality and operation of a given division.

**Assessment cycle:** An Assessment Cycle begins with the end of an operational year and ends at the beginning of the next operational year. For an assessment cycle, the activities include developing an assessment plan, analyzing the outcomes, reporting the assessment results, developing an action plan, and developing a new assessment plan.

**Unit:** A Unit is defined as an operational entity that has specifically defined goals/objectives, an operational budget, and functions as a unique component of the University operation. A planning unit or assessment unit may be a division, a department, a program, or an office.

**Division:** At Longwood, the division is defined as the area of operation that is under the leadership of the vice presidents who report to the President. Specifically, these divisions are: Division of Academic Affairs, Division of Student Affairs, Division of Administration and Finance, Division of Information and Instructional Technology Services, Division of Facilities Management and Public Safety, and Division of University Advancement.

Appendix I:

**Template for Assessment Report**

This template includes two parts:

**Part I:** a 2-page Executive Summary that highlights major achievements and areas needing further improvement

**Part II:** a 5-column table that summarizes the major components of the assessment report.

Department				Date of Report	
Report by	Name:	Reviewed by		Name:	
	Title:			Title:	
Longwood Strategic Plan Goal					
Unit mission statement					
<b><i>Program Goal</i></b>	<b><i>Intended Learning Outcomes or Service Outcomes</i></b>	<b><i>Target Performance Level (assessment tools and measures of success)</i></b>	<b><i>Level of Achievement (supporting data)</i></b>	<b><i>Closing the Loop (action plan)</i></b>	
<b><i>Program Goal 1</i></b>					
<b><i>Program Goal 2</i></b>					
<b><i>Program Goal 3</i></b>					
<b><i>(Add rows if needed.)</i></b>					

Partially adopted from Jim Nichol's Model: *Following a Road Map for Improvement of Student Learning and Support Services through Assessment* (presented: July-31 August 2, 2006).