Institutional Effectiveness Guide and Template for Academic Programs

SACSCOC Core Requirements:

2.5 The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes; (2) result in continuing improvement in institutional quality; and (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. (Institutional Effectiveness)

3.3.1 The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas: (Institutional Effectiveness)

3.3.1.1 Educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

Helpful hints:

- Build an initial roadmap for the reviewer to follow. Charted overviews, policy outlines, and, summary of goals, outcomes, and assessments.
- Organize narrative by key terms in Institutional Effectiveness guidelines. (Ongoing, Integrated, Institution-wide, Research-based, Systemic, Accomplishing Mission, Continuing Improvement 2.5 & 3.3.1)
- Explain in narrative how outcomes are related to mission and goals.
- The IE Reviewers must see Practice, Policy, and Product (examples).
- Reviewers look for numbers, percentages, and comparative and longitudinal data. Combine direct and indirect measures. Use multiple assessments in each area. (Research based. 2.5)
- Documentation must be ongoing and systematic. A minimum of 2 cycles should be included when comparing measures and making changes. (Ongoing. Systematic. 2.5)
- It is also important to include proof of analysis and integration of data and changes. Meeting minutes, agendas, email discussions. This shows leaders have shared, discussed, analyzed, and acted upon the results. (Analysis. Integrated. 3.3.1)
- Highlight sections pointing to proof. (Evidence of Improvement. 3.3.1)

Common Mistakes:

- No overview or clear “roadmap” to guide the evaluator
- Multiple formats in the documentation
- Confusion with traditional/nontraditional learning and on/off campus learning
Inconsistent names for the same program
Inconsistent terminology throughout document
Poorly align assessments with outcomes and goals
Using only indirect measures for assessment
Mismatch between unit documentation and information in catalog or website
Not enough focus on “Modifications and Continuous Improvement or Program Changes/Actions due to Assessment”
Mistaking completed strategies for assessment. (If you just have to report a check off list of actions, then you are not using assessment correctly. Find a direct measure related to learning outcomes)
Try to cover academic jargon or instruct on what IE is and is not
Are not specific enough or too specific
Write too much to cover the lack of substance
Confuse personnel evaluation with department evaluation
Attribute lack of consistency to prior format, method, or person
List portfolios, papers, or presentations as an assessment but have not developed a rubric for program evaluation
Fail to close the loop: modification come from nowhere and are not tied to assessment results; No assessment results are cited (No results = no use = no improvement = no compliance); Nothing done about assessment results cited
List only a summary of improvements: must include the “why”

Institutional Effectiveness Template

Comments in italics are not part of the template, but are meant to guide you through the process.

Academic Year:
Program/Department:
College:
Submission Date:
Contact (Person submitting this report):

I. Program/Department Mission:

Organize narrative by key terms in Institutional Effectiveness guidelines. (Ongoing, Integrated, Institution-wide, Researched-Based, Systemic, Accomplishing Mission, Continuing Improvement 2.5 & 3.3.1) Explain succinctly in narrative how outcomes are related to dept/unit/institutional mission and goals.
II. Program Goals and Student Learning Outcomes (Both Undergraduate and Graduate Programs):

Program goals must ultimately impact Student Learning Outcomes. Student Learning Outcomes are required for reporting on this standard. Student learning outcomes specify the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes students are expected to attain in courses or in a program. The expectation is that the institution will engage in on-going planning and assessment to ensure that for each academic program, the institution develops and assesses student learning outcomes. Outcomes do not change much from year to year, but strategies to accomplish outcomes might and probably should change. Clearly define outcomes in measureable terms found in respective assessments.

Methods for assessing the extent to which students achieve these outcomes are appropriate to the nature of the discipline and consistent over time to enable the institution to evaluate cohorts of students who complete courses or a program. Shared widely within and across programs, the results of this assessment can affirm the institution’s success at achieving its mission and can be used to inform decisions about curricular and programmatic revisions. At appropriate intervals, program and learning outcomes and assessment methods are evaluated and revised.

III. Assessments (Related to goal/outcome above):

- Name of the Assessment Tool (List the assessment time frame) – List the Outcomes #’s.

Use an assortment of well-matched assessment types related to respective goals/outcomes with a mix of direct and indirect measures. Describe the process of periodic review of assessments used.

For academic units, major filed tests, certification exams, exit interviews, exit exams, engagement surveys, employer surveys, rubrics for portfolio’s or capstone projects, internship supervisor surveys, etc. Use a mix of direct and indirect measures.

Direct Versus Indirect Measures: Assessment efforts are categorized as direct and indirect.

Direct measures are based on a sample of actual student work, including reports, exams, demonstrations, performances, and completed works. The strength of direct measurement is that faculty members or programs are capturing a sample of what students can do, which can be very strong evidence of student learning. A possible weakness of direct measurements is that not everything can be demonstrated in a direct way, such as values, perceptions, feelings, and attitudes.

Indirect measures are based upon a report of perceived student learning. The strength of indirect measures is that they can come from many perspectives. However, in the absence of direct evidence, assumptions must be made about how well perceptions match the reality of actual achievement. A possible weakness of indirect measures is that they are not as strong as direct measures because we have to make assumptions about what exactly the self-report means.
IV. Rationale for Outcomes and Assessments (Process of Data Analysis):

It is the program’s/department’s responsibility to make a compelling case as to why the sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution’s programs. Describe what assessment instruments were used and why they were selected. Evaluators are looking for use of multiple assessment methods. How was the data disseminated and analyzed throughout the department to make modifications?

V. Results (Use current results compared to past results if applicable):

Highlight the name of the Assessment Tool (List Outcome #s) and present results...

This contains a highlighted section that includes evidence for improvement. Insert graph, tables, and charts that provide mature data for your decisions of outcomes and for improvement. You report the data results here. You will discuss the results in the next section.

For academic units, major filed tests, certification exams, exit interviews, faculty selection of objectives and student progress on objectives (IDEA- Individual Development and Educational Assessment), exit exams(CCTST- California Critical Thinking Skills Test), engagement surveys(NSSE- National Survey of Student Engagement), employer surveys(TTU Employer Survey or Departmental Employer Survey),alumni surveys (TTU Alumni Survey Project or Departmental Alumni Survey), rubrics for portfolios or capstone projects, internship supervisor surveys, etc. Use a mix of direct and indirect measures.

Benchmarking Tips: The goal of benchmarking is to provide a standard for measuring, and to help identify where opportunities for improvement may reside. Setting benchmark goals with assessment data should be done so carefully. If you say that you will increase performance by specific percentage points within a time frame, chances are that you will experience a “ceiling effect” in the data over time. A better way to make benchmark comparisons with your data would be to compare to a rolling three year average, or compare to the national mean results of the assessment tool of applicable. Most standardized data sets have results disaggregated by discipline for comparisons, and they definitely have a national mean. This should be taken into consideration when setting your assessment goals in relation to your student learning outcomes.

VI. Modifications and Continuing Improvement: Program Changes due to Assessments (for Learning Outcomes)

For Outcomes #, #, & # Describe changes made.

Link to Assessment Data: Describe the link between modifications to strategies and the assessment results you reported.

Discuss evidence of improvement, based on analysis of assessment results, as opposed to a plan for improvement for each outcome mentioned above. Note: It’s okay to say that no modifications are needed at this time, but prove you looked at the data to determine this. Describe actual changes and why they were made, based on the described assessment above. You can mention upcoming plans for changes, but you should have already discussed actions that have already been implemented as a result of your data reported in the above section. Highlight the use of assessment results to improve education
programs, thus impacting student learning outcomes. And, highlight the use of assessment results to improve student learning outcomes. The Modification and Continuing Improvement section should be the main focus of your report. It should be extensive and concise. This section is the main reason for reporting institutional effectiveness, and should stand out in the report.

VII. Improvements to Assessment Plan

Discuss any changes made to the department’s assessment plan. Include any new tools or modifications to existing tools here.

Contact Academic Affairs for help:
Dr. Theresa Ennis 931-372-6124 tennis@tntech.edu
Dr. Sharon Huo 931-372-3225 xhuo@tntech.edu

Resources:
http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/PrinciplesOfAccreditation.PDF
“Through the Eyes of an Institutional Effectiveness Evaluator“ (2012) Dr. Marila Palmer, SACSCOC Summer Institute Presentation, Atlanta, GA.