

1. What is Outcomes Assessment (OA)?

Outcomes Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at measuring and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance. Assessment helps us create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education.

2. Why do assessment activities? What are the benefits?

Assessment activities have a variety of benefits. Assessment plans foster communication among faculty by encouraging faculty to work together in determining common goals, planning and piloting assessment measures, and analyzing the results to improve student learning. Thus, instruction is enhanced because of assessment results. Moreover, student learning is documented and these results can be used as part of the Program Review process.

Accreditation teams monitor how the institution determines its effectiveness. They will be specifically reviewing the assessment activities utilized by our institution and how this data is used to make decisions about how to improve student learning.

3. Will the institution use the results of Outcomes Assessment data to review my performance?

Assessment data/results will not be used for faculty evaluation regarding retention, tenure, and promotion recommendations or decisions by supervisors or administrators. In addition, assessment data will not be used to make comparisons among faculty, departments, or the campuses of the college. Confidentiality of the data from the results will be maintained.

4. Is Instruction the only area responsible for assessment?

No. Although student learning is the primary purpose of any teaching institution, and academic programs are mainly responsible for providing student learning experiences, support services also play a crucial role in the effectiveness of student learning. As part of any re-accreditation process, academic programs and support services are expected to participate in outcomes assessment.

5. What Outcomes Assessment Committees exist and what are their purposes?

OA Steering Committee

The OA steering committee is responsible for the oversight and evaluation of the efforts of the General Education and Disciplines Outcomes Assessment Committees and the Outcomes Assessment Coordinator. The committee oversees relevant AQIP action projects related to outcomes assessment and the improvement of student learning. The committee will report to the College and the Board of Trustees regarding its findings and make recommendations to improve student learning related to outcomes assessment.

General Education Outcomes Assessment Committee

The General Education Outcomes Assessment Committee is entrusted with the responsibility of implementing principles and an agenda that will assist Southwestern Illinois College faculty in further development and use of tools and procedures that will be used to assess student learning.

The General Education "core competencies" for all degree graduates to be assessed are: communication skills, reasoning skills, and citizenship.

In addition, the committee will identify and facilitate the allocation of college resources to support faculty outcomes assessment efforts.

Disciplines Committee

The purpose of the Disciplines Outcomes Assessment Committee is to improve and support student learning by assisting faculty in articulating mission and goals for each academic discipline, in developing methods to gain feedback on the discipline's progress in meeting those goals, and by assisting faculty in using feedback to modify the course and/or program to ensure that the goals are being met.

AS Degree Champion Committee

The mission of the Associate in Science Degree at Southwestern Illinois College is to prepare students with the well-rounded education in core competencies needed to transfer to a four-year institution to complete a baccalaureate degree in a discipline related to business, science, or mathematics. Through a system that continually assesses student learning, students will be provided the educational excellence necessary to continue their individual growth as life-long learners. Additionally, this committee may track student success upon graduation and/or transfer.

AA Degree Champion Committee

The mission of the Associate in Arts Degree at Southwestern Illinois College is to prepare students with the well-rounded education in core competencies needed to transfer to a four-year institution to complete a baccalaureate degree in a liberal arts related discipline. Through a system that continually assesses student learning, students will be provided the educational excellence necessary to continue their individual growth as life-long learners. Additionally, this committee may track student success upon graduation and/or transfer.

Citizenship, Communication Skills, and Reasoning Skills Committees

These "Core Competency" committees oversee the assessment projects for the institutional competency skills: writing, oral communications, computer literacy, quantitative literacy, critical thinking, civic & social awareness, and accountability. The members of these committees develop assessment tools, plan pilot and implementation process, review and analyze the data collected, and write a final report recommending any changes, if needed.

Citizenship	Communication Skills	Reasoning Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic & Social Awareness • Accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer Literacy • Oral Communications • Writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Thinking • Quantitative Literacy

All Programs and Disciplines are encouraged to complete at least one competency skill map within each of the three ‘core competency’ categories.

6. How is administration involved in outcomes assessment?

Outcomes Assessment is faculty driven. Faculty members are responsible for developing, implementing, and evaluating their own assessment plans. Administrators serve on many of the OA Committees to keep abreast of the committee’s needs & goals and to support activities faculty wish to pursue related to student learning outcomes. Based on results from data collected, administration provides the financial resources to support the outcomes assessment coordinator and faculty in their outcomes assessment endeavors. The administration also allocates dollars for faculty development related to enhancing and documenting student learning activities.

7. How long do faculty members serve on the Outcomes Assessment committee?

Committee terms for full-time faculty will be two years in length, and members will be voted upon in the various divisions, as they are for curriculum committee. Committee terms for adjunct faculty will be one year in length, and members will be selected by the appropriate Instructional Dean.

8. How will students be affected by outcomes assessment activities/results?

Assessment data gathered to monitor success in meeting goals will not be used to pass/fail a student from a class or program-unless that data also is a requirement of the course. In addition, assessment of student learning will not be used as an entrance or exit requirement from academic programs, unless it has been so identified by the faculty.

9. What measure(s) should be utilized for assessment?

Multiple measures and multiple means are recommended to determine if educational goals are being achieved. No one measure/instrument is comprehensive enough to capture the wide range of goals within an academic program. Faculty are encouraged to address 3 domains of student performance – student knowledge (cognitive outcomes), skills (behavioral outcomes), and professional values (affective outcomes/attitudes) when assessing the degree/program.

Data is collected to determine if educational goals are being met directly and indirectly. Direct measures include things such as capstone experiences, portfolios, proficiency testing, case studies, practical examination, clinical evaluation, etc. Indirect measures include survey results, transfer rates, employment rates, retention rates, completers, etc.

The Higher Learning Commission encourages colleges to set benchmarks and analyze data over a period of time to establish trends or patterns related to student learning outcomes.

10. When is a discipline or program finished collecting data for outcomes assessment?

Outcomes assessment is a long-term quality improvement program meaning that the outcomes assessment process will also be on-going to assure continuous improvement in student learning, academic achievement, and personal development.

11. What role will part-time employees play in the development and implementation of assessment plans?

All faculty are encouraged to utilize classroom assessment techniques to improve student learning. The level of involvement by part-time employees in the development of assessment plans is voluntary and will vary amongst the disciplines and/or areas within the college. All faculty must be aware of the core competencies and of all the educational goals within his/her discipline as the student learning will be assessed in a multitude of courses-including full and part time faculty classes.

12. Is outcomes assessment related to AQIP?

Outcomes Assessment activities are a requirement of any accreditation process, whether it be the traditional model or AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Project). Accreditation agencies are no longer primarily looking at an institution's resources to grant accreditation. Rather, they are requiring institutions to be accountable for providing the necessary services for student learning. The data generated from our outcomes assessment activities will only be a part of the AQIP process.

13. What does the Higher Learning Commission, our regional accrediting agency, say about Outcomes Assessment?

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) has developed six fundamental questions related to student learning outcomes.

HLC Six Fundamental Questions

1. How are your stated student learning outcomes appropriate to your mission, programs, and students?
2. What evidence do you have that students achieve your stated learning outcomes?
3. In what ways do you analyze and use evidence of what and how well students learn?
4. How do you ensure shared responsibility for assessment of student learning?
5. How do you evaluate and improve the effectiveness of your efforts to assess and improve student learning?
6. In what ways do you inform the public and other stakeholders about what and how well your students are learning?

14. How do I become involved in Outcomes Assessment? Who should I contact?

Every instructor at SWIC has the opportunity to participate in OA at the classroom level and is encouraged to attend to the CATs (Classroom Assessment Techniques) workshops offered at the beginning of each fall/spring semester. Contact your department chair/coordinator to get involved at the

program/department level. If you are interested in serving on a committee at the institutional level, you could contact the OA coordinator, and/or your department chair, program coordinator, or dean.

You can also learn more about outcomes assessment at SWIC in the OA Handbook (<http://www.swic.edu/outcomes/handbook/>), library resources, new faculty orientation sessions, Adjunct Academy, and the Success Strategies Training for all new faculty.

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