WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

University Assessment Steering Committee

Purpose, Activities, and Guidelines
2020 through 2025

Introduction

The University Assessment Steering Committee (UASC) was established in 2001 to develop and recommend assessment policy and plans for the institution. The Assessment Plan and Timetable, which was approved in 2002-03, included the committee charge and also served to guide academic departments in the creation of assessment plans and establishment of committee structures in support of on-going assessment activities at that time. As the University's assessment culture has evolved, the UASC has broadened its focus to include assessment of learner support units across campus in order to more clearly reflect the needs of the University and its stakeholders.

Purpose

The purpose of the University Assessment Steering Committee is to collaborate with campus stakeholders to develop and support a culture of assessment for continuous improvement with an emphasis on student learning outcomes. A periodic and university-wide assessment of programs, lead and supported by UASC, can help to improve the educational experience and supports WMU's departments with accreditation institutions/bodies where appropriate. Recognizing that learning happens in the curricular and co-curricular environments, the UASC guides assessment programs for both academic units and learner support units to help improve the overall learning experience of WMU students. The UASC aids faculty, department chairs, college administrators, and staff in developing useful and precise tools of assessment in their classes, programs, and colleges. Acknowledging that some fields already are subject to external accreditation, the UASC seeks to align assessment, accreditation, and program review processes.

Definitions

The definitions of several terms associated with assessment are provided in order to clarify and differentiate assessment from other University activities such as program planning, strategic planning, self-study or evaluation.

Assessment

"Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning" (Huba & Freed, 2000, p. 8).

The University Assessment Steering Committee's work is focused on the assessment of student learning and development. Other assessment activities, for example activities related to professional accreditation and program evaluation, are valued at WMU and the UASC supports the elements of accreditation and evaluation related to the assessment of student learning and development.

Academic program planning
This is a comprehensive review of academic programs that should align effective assessment with campus-wide continuous improvement, and provide meaningful data-driven information to assist with strategic planning. The academic and learner support unit program review process should provide direction in planning for creating, sustaining, growing, merging, or eliminating academic and co-curricular programs in order to maintain program relevancy for both students and the community. Assessment of student learning is involved, but only plays a small role in academic program planning.

Assessment plan
Assessment plans identify the structure, timeline and uses of assessment within the unit. Plans should include the following:

- Clear statements of intended student learning outcomes with criteria for student performance
- Multiple measures to determine the extent to which students are meeting those intended outcomes
- Timeline for collecting data on student performance measures
- Planned uses of assessment results for program improvement

Plans are dynamic documents that change to reflect lessons learned from assessment results as well as advances in the discipline. Plans should be continuously reviewed and formally updated at least every five years.

Goals
The goals of UASC are to help members of the Western Michigan University community to:

Recognize the work and successes of faculty and staff in conducting and promoting assessment activities and quality efforts of continuous improvement.

Inform and educate the University community about assessment activities, resources, and opportunities to increase the awareness and value of the processes and benefits of doing assessment for continuous improvement. Including evaluating the campus culture of assessment and data-informed decision making on a regular basis.

Support the University community to develop and implement assessment efforts. The UASC reviews and provides feedback on assessment plans, learning activities, and use of the results in completing the assessment process to promote the development and continuous improvement of assessment planning activities across the institution.

Engage the campus community through professional development and learning opportunities such as the annual assessment conference, the assessment handbook, webinars and trainings.

Activities

The UASC engages in activities to support, evaluate, and enhance the culture of assessment at WMU. The activities are intended to provide opportunities and support for faculty, staff, and students to engage in research about assessment, to learn and apply assessment techniques, and to recognize and celebrate those who excel in assessment. The UASC is involved with and coordinates the following activities.

Recognize
- *Individual Assessment Excellence Award* – Awarded for research in student learning and work in assessment for program improvement
- *Collaboration Assessment Excellence Award* – Awarded for an outstanding assessment process actively using results for program improvement involving colleagues across multiple, different departments, programs, and/or units
- *Unit Assessment Excellence Award* – Awarded for an outstanding assessment process actively using results for program improvement
- *Assessment Mini Grants* - Awarded to advance the formal assessment of student learning outcomes and program quality
- *Examples of Practice Recognition* - Use the Culture of Assessment Report data to recognize programs or efforts that were evaluated and established as excellent examples of practice

Inform
- Regularly share resources and training opportunities from across the profession
- Provide support to units regarding assessment plans, processes, reporting and results
- Provide guidance and training related to assessment tools, including technological tools
- Works in collaboration with the Director of Western Essential Studies in order to share updates and assessment results with the campus community
- Assessment news and best practices shared as a part of the Institutional Effectiveness newsletter
- Website with assessment information and resources
- Share (e.g. through list serv, email, website) assessment related results with the campus community (e.g. Metric Monday)

Support
- Serve as a consultation and review team to provide feedback and guidance on proposed assessment plans, assessment process, reports, and making data-informed decisions
- Assessment Handbook
- Provide resources (e.g. worksheets, the handbook, and workshops) related to assessment practice

> *Engage*
> - Engage the campus community in a regular review of the culture of assessment through the submissions of program assessments, evaluation of these assessments using a rubric, and providing feedback to the programs, chairs, departments, colleges, and VPs
> - Offer Assessment Mini Grant presentations by Assessment Mini Grant recipients
> - UASC Annual Activity Summary
> - Annual assessment conference/professional development with a keynote speaker and breakout workshops
> - Engage the campus community with discussions about making meaning (and action) out of institutional data sets (e.g. Project CEO, NCHA, NSSE)

Structure and Membership

The UASC is an independent committee that reports to the provost. The membership structure of the UASC was approved on February 16, 2015, at the UASC's monthly meeting. UASC is comprised of 6 permanent members: program manager assessment and administrative assistant senior from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, the director, assessment and effectiveness, Division of Student Affairs, the director, assessment and effectiveness, University College, director, Western Essential Studies, rotating permanent member from the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Rotating committee membership represents areas of the campus charged with student learning and development. Members are drawn from the academic colleges, learner support units, other university committees, students and administrators. Units represented will be assessed on an on-going basis to be representative of the activities, goals and future direction of UASC. The rotating members represent the seven academic colleges, the Graduate College, Lee Honors College, Office of Institutional Effectiveness, University Libraries, Undergraduate Studies Council, Committee to Oversee General Education, academic advising, Haenicke Institute for Global Education, and two representatives from the Division of Student Affairs. Rotating members serve staggered, three-year terms. New members are recruited as needed, through a process developed by the committee of the whole.

Other units on campus, e.g., Western Student Association (WSA), Graduate Students Association (GSA), will be advised of the work of UASC through the distribution of agendas if requested. WSA and GSA are welcome to send representatives to monthly meetings of the committee.

Comprised of representatives across the campus, the UASC closely works with and receives fiscal and operational support from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

The UASC meetings are presided over by the committee chair. At the last meeting of the academic year, a vice-chair is elected from the rotating membership. If the current committee chair represents academic affairs, the vice-chair must represent learner support units, and vice versa. After serving one year as vice chair, the vice chair becomes chair of the committee. This transition occurs for any meetings that fall after the last one of the academic year, normally in May. Both positions are expected to participate in setting the agenda for each meeting. In the event of the UASC chair needing to resign or vacate their position, the vice chair becomes chair

and a new vice chair is selected from among the rotating members. The past chair continues to support the chair and vice chair through participation in monthly agenda setting meetings and attendance at regular monthly meetings.

Executive planning committee description and function

The executive committee consists of the 6 permanent members, (program manager assessment and administrative assistant senior from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, the director, assessment, marketing and communications, Student Affairs, the director, assessment and effectiveness, University College, the director, WMU Essential Studies, rotating permanent member from the Office of Diversity and Inclusion), as well as the UASC chair, UASC vice chair and UASC past chair (potentially 9 members total). The executive committee meets monthly, (normally 1 to 2 weeks prior to each regular monthly UASC meeting), to propose direction and scope of work for the entire committee and set monthly meeting agendas. The past chair is expected to attend monthly agenda setting meetings, and regular monthly committee meetings, in order to provide a continuance of leadership and to provide guidance and assistance to the chair and vice chair as they transition to their new roles and throughout the year after chairing the committee.

Description of the collaborative relationship of the UASC and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness

The UASC and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness work hand-in-hand to support assessment efforts across the University community. Specific contributions from the Office of the Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) include: fiscal and operational support to the UASC, including secretarial support to the committee and leadership of assessment professional development activities; oversight of the administration of institution-wide surveys (National Survey of Student Engagement, Faculty Survey of Student Engagement); liaison between Higher Learning Commission requirements for assessment and the UASC; liaison on matters related to assessment and accreditation; shared leadership with the chair, vice chair, past chair and executive committee of the UASC.

Specific contributions from the UASC include: serves as the University-wide assessment policy, planning and resource coordination group; advises the provost and senior administrators about assessment policy, resources, and findings from assessment reports; determines an annual calendar of institutional assessment support and educational activities; assists the director of WMU Essential Studies with assessment activities as requested; informally reviews and provides assistance in the review of department and unit assessment plans as requested, and examines assessment findings; reviews and approves assessment grants; reviews and provides feedback on assessment reports. Both UASC and OIE will provide liaisons as needed to promote assessment activities and support a culture of assessment at Western Michigan University.

Expectations of service from chair, vice chair and past chair

It is expected that the chair, vice chair and past chair will participate in the monthly agenda setting meetings and regular monthly committee meetings. Attendance and participation in these meetings will help the vice chair to learn the functions of the executive committee, allow them to help to

shape the work of the larger committee as a whole and prepare them for taking over as the chair at the appointed time. It is also expected that the vice chair will actively be involved in monthly meetings, assisting the chair in moving the agenda forward through leadership and collaboration with chair and past chair.

Monthly meetings will be run by the chair using Robert's Rules of Order with assistance and input provided by executive committee members when requested.

The chair will prepare an annual report at the end of the academic year, sharing updates and accomplishments from the past year. The report should be approved by UASC members by vote at the May meeting and shared electronically, (copying the executive committee members, the provost and the vice president for student affairs), no later than June 30.

Expectations of service from UASC members

Members of the UASC are expected to participate in the activities of the committee to ensure that the functions and responsibilities can be executed. It is expected that members will attend monthly meetings, serve on at least one subcommittee, and promote and support assessment outreach activities through attendance of various UASC sponsored workshops, conferences, and special events.

Subcommittees

The UASC convenes a number of subcommittees to conduct the work of the committee. Following is a list of the main subcommittees normally assembled for this purpose. Other ad hoc committees will be organized as the need arises.

Campus Support Committee
- Use data from the last round of the Culture of Assessment report to identify units across the institution with needs
- Assessment report (distribute reports to subcommittees, update templates and rubrics, recommend timelines, administrative support for reporting process and assist with writing feedback report(s) and providing recommendations)

Information and Communication
- Develop opportunities to spread the word to the university community about data including NSSE, FSSE, and other surveys and data sources
- Use data from the last round of Culture of Assessment report to identify what resources could be of most use/most need, cultivate, and share resources

Assessment Awards and Recognition
- Assessment Awards (review and selection of Assessment Fellows Grants, Assessment Excellence Collaboration, Individual and Unit Awards and Assessment Mini Grants)
- Use Culture of Assessment report to recognize programs of excellence.

Engagement and Assessment in Action Conference
- Assessment in Action (assist with various planning activities)
- Engage campus to better utilize assessment data we have available and spread the word to the university community about this data including CLA+, NSSE, FSSE, and other surveys and data sources
- Facilitate regular (every other year) review of the culture of assessment across WMU

University Assessment Steering Committee Review

The UASC shall review its purpose, activities and guidelines at least every five years to insure effectiveness and relevance of the committee. The next review shall occur no later than 2026.

UASC Projected Timeline of Activities

September	Monthly meeting -On-boarding of new members prior to meeting -Call for Mini Grant proposals goes out (due at the end of September)
October	Monthly meeting
November	Monthly meeting -Mini grants awarded
December	Monthly meeting -Call for nominations for Assessment Excellence Awards goes out (due in January)
January	Monthly meeting -Collaboration, Individual, and Unit Assessment Excellence Award nominations due
February	Monthly meeting -Assessment Excellence Awards selection
March	Monthly meeting
April	Monthly meeting -Call for nominations for vice chair Annual assessment conference/professional development (Excellence awards presented)
May	Monthly meeting -Select UASC vice chair from among non-permanent members -UASC Annual Activity Report – draft created after May meeting, sent to members for review
August retreat	-Set goals and priorities for the year (review current strategic plan) -Annual Activity Report vote for approval; sent to provost, vice president for diversity and inclusion, and vice president for Student Affairs by no later than September 30 annually

References

Huba, M.E. & J.E. Freed (2000). *Learner-centered assessment on college campuses*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon

Appendix – UASC Membership Structure Terms

University Assessment Steering Committee
Revised Membership Structure
April 15, 2024

Currently, there are 17 representatives to the University Assessment Steering Committee (UASC) and 6 permanent members, for a total of 23 members. Prior to 2014, there had been one officer of the UASC, the committee chair. In September 2014, the UASC approved a leadership change of the UASC, adding a vice-chair who will assume the role of chair after one year.   This was done to create a seamless transition in leadership each year. The UASC also determined that the chair and vice-chair should always represent both the academic and student support sides of Western. In December 2014, it was recommended that term lengths be changed from 2 years to 3 years, so as to allow greater leadership development for the two officers: chair and vice chair. In discussion in January 2015, it was suggested that terms on the UASC be staggered to allow for greater continuity on the committee. Based on those actions, discussions and additional deliberation, the UASC Executive Committee recommends the following changes to membership structure for UASC, effective spring 2015. Note this is terms for the current year 2023-24. In the fall 2024 the rotating term schedule will be updated to persons currently serving in those positions.

Rotating Members		
Unit	**New Term**	**Comments**
Haworth College of Business	2022-25	
WMUx	2022-25	
Graduate College	2022-25	
Office of Diversity and Inclusion	2023-26	
Academic Advising	2023-26	
College of Arts and Sciences (2)	2022-25	
	2023-26	
College of Aviation	2023-26	
College of Health and Human Services	2023-26	
Haenicke Institute for Global Education	2022-25	
Undergraduate Studies Council	2021-24	
Division of Student Affairs (at large rep.)	2023-26	
College of Education and Human Development	2022-25	
College of Engineering and Applied Sciences	2021-24	
College of Fine Arts	2021-24	
Lee Honors College	2021-24	
Libraries	2021-24	
Institutional Effectiveness	2021-24	
Permanent Members		
Program Manager Assessment, Institutional Effectiveness	--------------	
Administrative Assistant Senior, Institutional Effectiveness	--------------	
Director Assessment, Marketing and Communications, Student Affairs	--------------	
WMU Essential Studies	--------------	
Merz Tate College	VACANT	
Office of Diversity and Inclusion	--------------	

Rotating Term Schedule

	Academic Units	**Student Support Units**
2021-24	CEAS CFA LHC	IE Libraries USC
2022-25	CAS CEHD HCoB HIGE - **VACANT** Graduate College	WMUx
2023-26	CAS CHHS CoA	Academic Advising DOSA (at-large rep) Office of Diversity and Inclusion