Winthrop University's
Institutional Assessment Plan and Guide

The Winthrop University Institutional Assessment Plan and Guide (IAPG) was developed in 2008-09 under the auspices of the University's Office of Accreditation, Accountability, and Academic Services (AAAS). The IAP&G is updated biennially using feedback from university personnel, current government reporting regulations, and current Southern Association for Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) regulations and standards. **Major enhancements in the 2013 edition** include updates on Comprehensive Academic Program Review (APR), inclusion of SACS COC 2012 Resource Manual updates from February 2013, and electronic resource updates. Portions of the original IAPG were adapted, with permission, from the University of Virginia's Assessment Guide.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction and Purpose

Winthrop uses assessment findings to continuously improve academic, administrative and educational support programs and student learning. A strong learning environment along with excellent administrative and academic student support services enhance the ability of faculty, staff, and administrators to provide Winthrop students with enriching educational experiences. Assessment and evidence-based improvement are frequently described as elements of a multi-stage cyclical process with the final stage labeled as, *closing the loop.* A better description may be an adaptation of Frank [Dance's 1967 Helix Model of Communication](#) wherein the process starts at the bottom, is initially small, and grows over time based upon prior experiences and externalities. Wehlberg ([2007](#)) suggested a helical model of assessment and evidence-based improvement is a more accurate metaphor than *closing the loop* when describing the assessment and improvement process. A directional refinement of the Wehlberg spiral is proffered; results from assessment initiatives may drill down to program-levels or upward toward institutional levels, informing program or learning improvement opportunities.

History of Assessment at Winthrop University (WU)

WU's history of institutional-level assessment dates back to the mid 1980's when general education data were collected on targeted student groups, typically first-year and senior student cohorts. Aggregated institutional-level results were conveyed to academic deans and division vice presidents who were encouraged to examine and discuss results with their unit personnel. Program personnel tracked use of results. Winthrop's decentralized approach to assessment of institutional effectiveness met SACS COC reporting obligations during WU's 2001 reaffirmation. In 2004 SACS COC transitioned from "must and should" statements to three categories of standards: Core Requirements (CR), Comprehensive Standards (CS), and Federal Requirements (FR). The 2004 SACS COC changes included new obligations for centralized reporting, documentation of evidence-based improvements, and an evidence-based quality enhancement plan (QEP) to improve learning in a focused area. SACS COC now describes its decennial and fifth-year reviews as institutional audit reaffirmation processes.

Winthrop's early assessment initiatives resulted in conceptualization and adoption of several guiding documents including *[Principles of Assessment](#)*, initially adopted in the 1990's and reaffirmed by Academic Leadership Council (ALC) in 2003. WU's *Principles of Assessment* is consistent with the

American Association of Higher Education's[1] Nine Principles of Assessment. The best-practices approach described in an internally-developed white paper, a *System to Assess General Education (SAGE)* was adapted for broader application in 2009 as Winthrop transitioned to documentation of program and learning outcomes assessment, and evidence-based improvements for administrative, academic, and academic student support service programs.

Another document developed and adopted in the 1990s and reaffirmed in 2000, the *Guidelines on Faculty Credit for Assessment Activities*, articulated how WU faculty and administrators valued the work of assessment. More recently, in 2012-13, academic administrators provided input into reporting elements for *Activity Insight,* improving documentation of faculty work with assessment.

WU has a history of leveraging resources to improve evidence-based decision-making. Intra- and extra-institutional professional development opportunities enable campus personnel to improve skills and knowledge associated with assessment and reporting expectations. Dr. Dee Fink, author of *Creating Significant Learning Experiences,* conducted a 2006 campus-wide assessment workshop during which participants shared ideas for authentic assessments that would yield actionable results, and discussed issues associated with prioritizing limited resources to most effectively accomplish program and learning assessment.   AAC&U awarded WU a Core Commitments grant in 2008 to conduct a Student Excellence, Engagement, and Development (SEED) Conference showcasing program and learning assessments by campus professionals, and discussions on how results could inform program and learning improvements.   In 2009, AAAS published WU's inaugural edition of the IAP&G, and conducted workshops and small group meetings preparing for campus-wide transition to WU's centralized assessment plan and improvement reporting system. During 2011-12, members of the university wide academic assessment committee (who spearheaded conceptualization of WU's University Level Competencies in 2009-2010) developed and delivered a four-part professional development series on assessment hosted by WU's Teaching and Learning Center.

External Mandates

As an institution whose students are eligible for Title IV funding, WU is obligated to meet federal and SACS COC reporting requirements. As a public comprehensive master's institution in SC, WU is obligated to meet state reporting obligations. See section on Transparency for links to public reports.   SACS COC and discipline-based accrediting organizations mandate institutions provide evidence of ongoing

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[1] AAHE is now the American Association for Higher Education and Accreditation

systematic assessment (within administrative, academic, and academic student support services units) that yield results used to continuously improve programs and learning.

> ***C.R. 2.5:*** *The institution engages in **ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide** research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services that (a) results in continuing improvement and (b) demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. **(Institutional Effectiveness)***

> ***C.S. 3.3.1:*** *The institution **identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services**; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and **provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results.** (pgs. 50-53)*

Dr. Belle Wheelan, SACS COC President, met with SC CHE to discuss accreditation and reaffirmation, sharing the SACS COC standards most-often cited for non-compliance (Table One).

Table One: Standards most often cited for non-compliance

Requirement Title	*% Non-compliance*	*Processes, Practices, Data Sources (OARS, others)*
CS 3.3.1 IE (any section)	59%	Infrastructure for IE
3.3.1.1 IE	45%	ALL academic degree programs
3.3.1.2 IE-administrative support services	27%	Annual reports for administrative units to address unit assessment plans and evidence-based improvements emerging from analysis and use of assessment results
3.3.1.3 IE-academic student support services	25%	Integrate with NSSE, other data
3.3.1.4 IE-research	17%	Inventory, use of results
3.3.1.5 IE-comm/pub ser	29%	Inventory, use of results
CS 3.3.2 QEP-CR 2.12	48%	Broad-based participation and
CS 3.5.1 College-level competencies	18%	Assessment of gen ed
CS 3.5.4 Term degrees	25%	Faculty information system
CS 3.7.1 Faculty competency	23%	Credentialing system: PICS and Activity Insight

Source: http://www.che.sc.gov/Commission Calendar&Materials/Mar2010MtgMaterials/Wheelan_Presentation.pdf pg.4

The *2010 Principles of Accreditation* were in effect when Winthrop successfully completed its decennial reaffirmation in December 2011. In January 2012, SACS COC updated its *Principles of Accreditation* standards. In February 2013, SACS COC updated its companion *Resource Manual for the SACS COC Principles of Accreditation*, 2012 edition. SACS COC updates for 2012 and 2013 are included in the 2013 edition of WU's IAP&G.[2, 3]

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[2] http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2012PrinciplesOfAcreditation.pdf

[3] http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/Resource%20Manual.pdf

Transparency: Winthrop's Institutional-Level Assessment Studies

Winthrop uses data from its institutional studies to achieve transparency as evidenced by publicly available reports such as IPEDS, SC CHE data and publications, SC State Accountability Reports, College Navigator, the Common Data Set, WU Facts and Information (e.g., enrollment, credit hour production, completions, student profiles for new first year, transfers, undergraduates and graduates), the Voluntary System of Accountability's College Portraits (VSA-CP), and NSSE. Pass rates on professional credentialing examinations like PRAXIS provide another metric of WU's institutional effectiveness[4]. WU's institutional assessment results also inform external surveys used for proprietary rankings available to the public, including ACT's Institutional Data Questionnaire (ACTIDQ), Barron's Profiles of American Colleges PAC, College Board, US News and World Report College Rankings, Wintergreen Orchard House Survey, Princeton Review college rankings, and the Peterson's Guide.

Intra-institutional transparency is achieved when results that are distributed to vice presidents, deans, program directors, and unit assessment coordinators are subsequently shared with campus professionals for discussion, analysis and evidence-based decisions, with emphasis on identifying opportunities for improving programs and learning.

Winthrop's multi-year cycle of institutional studies administered through the Office of Accreditation, Accountability and Academic Services (AAAS) includes a graduating senior survey (results reported in WU's VSA-CP and proprietary college rankings reports), an annual alumni survey (results disseminated internally, and reported in accreditation reaffirmation documents), WU's annual SC Accountability Reports), the NSSE, the Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI), and competency-based assessment of undergraduate students using externally-produced instruments. Since 1996, WU has used the College Basic Academic Subjects Examination (College BASE), the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), the ETS Proficiency Profile (ETS PP) Abbreviated Form and the ACT pilot instrument, *Critical Thinking Assessment Battery*, (based upon its CAAP instrument) to assess competencies associated with critical thinking and communication. In 2012, WU reported critical thinking and writing proficiency results (ETS Proficiency Profile) on its VSA-CP web site.

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[4] http://www.winthrop.edu/uploadedFiles/coe/PraxisSummaryPassRate%20InitalProgramCompleters.pdf

Multi-year overview of institutional-level studies

Winthrop's multi-year master plan (Table Two) for institutional-level studies facilitates resource planning (budgets, space and equipment needs, and labor) and integrating new initiatives. WU transitioned to biennial NSSE administration in 2009 and now alternates NSSE with the PSRI. WU was an invited spring 2012 participant in piloting penultimate NSSE 2.0 and new topical modules on civic engagement and diversity (informing ULCs #2 and #3). During fall 2012, WU began a new seven-year collaboration with the CSRDE-ACT to share student retention data for the purpose of benchmarking and informing decisions to improve retention rates. In 2013, Winthrop accepted an opportunity to participate in Tufts' National Study of Learning Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) wherein the National Student Clearing House accesses the Catalist database, matches and de-identifies data, and then sends de-identified data reports to Tufts' CIRCLE for distribution to participating institutions. Winthrop is a member of NSLVE partner organizations including Campus Compact, the AASCU's American Democracy Project, AAC&U-Civic Learning Democratic Engagement, and NASPA).

Table Two: Overview of Institutional-Level Studies

Initiatives		Description	Frequency	Last & Next Administration	Data Uses (improvement, verification)
Graduating Senior Survey		internally-developed	semi-annual	Last: Dec12 & May13 Next: Dec13 & May14	• Program and learning improvements • External reporting requirements for federal & state government, accreditation agencies, & Voluntary System of Accountability (College Portraits). • Proprietary college ranking surveys
Annual Alumni Survey		alumni awarded degrees in preceding AY	annual	Last: June 2013 Next: June 2014	
PSRI, Personal & Social Responsibility Inventory		externally-developed (AAC&U, Iowa State University administers)	biennial (alternate with NSSE)	Last: Spring 2013 Next: Spring 2015	• External benchmarking , Metric for ULCs #2 and #3 • Program and learning improvements • External reporting requirements for federal & state government, and accreditation agencies (associated with community/public service)
NSSE	Indirect metrics	externally-developed measure of students' self-reported experiences	biennial (alternate with PSRI)	Last: NSSE12 pilot 2.0 Next: NSSE 2.0 Spring 2014	• External benchmarking • Metric for GLI, ULCs #2 and #3, Community/Public Service, Employer-desired skills, internships/practica, overall satisfaction with WU educational experiences • Program & learning improvements • External reporting requirements for federal & state government, and accreditation agencies (associated with community/public service)
NSSE Module CivicEngagement			biennial	Last: NSSE12 2.0 pilot Next: NSSE14 2.0	• Metric to assess WU mission to deliver programs in the context of community/public service, • WU evidence for optional Carnegie Community and public service Classification, Campus Compact, West Forum, ULC #2
NSSE Module Diversity					• Metric to assess WU mission to value and create learning environment that fosters and values diversity, and ULC #3
FSSE		faculty perceptions	FSSE11	Last: FSSE11 Next: TBD	Faculty and administrators to evaluate contributions of FSSE and PSRI Campus professionals' results to inform decisions that improve programs and learning.
ETS PP, AAC&U VALUE rubrics	Direct, externally-developed skills & knowledge assessment		ETS PP posted on VSA-CP 2012	Transition to AAC&U VALUE rubrics in 2013	Replace with AAC&U VALUE rubrics to assess senior proficiency with WU's four ULCs.

Chapter Two: Elements of WU's centralized reporting infrastructure

WU's six strategic values (*the Winthrop Community, Student Body, Academic Life, Facilities and Environs, Support Services, and Partnerships and Collaborations)* guide development of program and learning outcomes articulated by academic, administrative and academic student support units. WU's strategic values are reported in the [Vision of Distinction (VOD)](#) and further described in [The Winthrop Plan](#) (2006). WU's President presents the *annual VOD brochure* to faculty and staff during the August Opening Address, after which it is posted on the President's website. For each strategic value, the annual VOD brochure enumerates multi-year strategic initiatives and annual objectives to inform the work of administrative, academic program and educational support units. The multi-year initiatives and annual objectives for each strategic value are posted on the President's web site as a working grid, showing units and personnel charged with responsibility for the initiatives. With the addition of a *NOTES* column, the grid becomes a reporting template for status updates.

IAP&G facilitates centralized reporting

WU's *IAP&G* helps faculty, staff and administrators integrate unit- or program-based reporting requirements with externally-mandated centralized documentation.   Winthrop's centralized reporting is accomplished through its Online Assessment Plan and Improvement Reporting System ([OARS 2.0](#)) which enables program coordinators to document how assessment-based improvements and achievements in academic, administrative, and academic student support units facilitate achievement of Winthrop's strategic values. Assessment plans, and evidence-based improvement reports for undergraduate degree programs must include the four ULCs (discussed in [Chapter four](#)) along with discipline/degree-specific learning outcomes documenting what students know, are able to do and demonstrate (e.g., habits of mind, attitudes and perspectives) as a result of successfully completing academic programs.

Mandated Elements of Assessment Plan and Improvement Reporting

SACS COC requires academic, administrative, and academic student support programs to articulate, document, and update assessment plans, results, and evidence-based improvements in a centralized location. Academic programs and, as appropriate, academic student support programs, must articulate, assess and document student learning outcomes, and how results from student learning assessment inform actions taken to improve learning. Academic degree programs are required to provide evidence that student learning outcomes are assessed at the conclusion of the degree (e.g., senior level assessment for students earning baccalaureate degrees, graduate-level assessment at the conclusion of masters or specialist degrees), that assessment results are analyzed by members of the program faculty, not just a single faculty member (e.g., instructor of record) or administrator, and that assessment results are used to improve programs and learning.

Assessment reports that primarily feature student performance at beginning or intermediary levels of the degree program are insufficient to demonstrate compliance with regional accreditation requirements.

Winthrop's Online Assessment Plans and Improvement Reporting System (OARS)

In 2009, Winthrop's newly established Office of Accreditation, Accountability and Academic Service (AAAS) began a multi-year migration from WU's decentralized assessment documentation system to a centralized system to meet SACS COC requirements. Designing and transitioning to a centralized assessment plan and improvement documentation system involved campus-wide discussions and professional development strategies described in Chapter One of the present IAP&G. OARS 1.0 was WU's centralized site for program level assessment data and improvement reports for 2007-08 through 2010-11. Periodically, OARS is updated based upon feedback from internal stakeholders and external reporting requirements. For example, in 2013, Winthrop is using OARS 2.0 which expands capabilities to insert hyperlinks to archived documents, and to link undergraduate university level competencies (ULCs) to student learning outcomes articulated by degree programs. Reporting flexibility was enhanced with the addition of information buttons to quickly link users to the *IAP&G* or clarify the type of information needed.   OARS 2.0 has an upgraded system of drop-down menus and constructed response box options that provide enhanced flexibility for academic administrative, and academic student support services, to document unit assessment plans for articulated outcomes.

Reporting Assessment Results and Use of Results

De-identified data are used in summary reports in which the focus of analysis and reports is always at the level of the program or a cohort; results associated with individuals are confidential.

During any one academic or fiscal year, programs are in varying stages of assessment and evidence-based actions/improvements processes. The OARS 2.0 accommodates such variability with constructed response opportunities enabling personnel to provide narrative clarifying assessment and improvement initiatives. All programs or units are expected to post assessment plans for the current year by October 1st. Designated campus professionals who are responsible for uploading assessment plans, results and improvement reports (actions, decisions) into OARS have log-in access 24-7 with one exception.   In mid-February, AAAS archives assessment plans/improvement reports for the preceding year, and the system may be unavailable to campus professionals for 24 hours to accomplish the archival process.

Winthrop's OARS 2.0 accommodates reporting obligations for regional (SACS COC), specialized program accreditation requirements, and WU's comprehensive APR process. All academic degree programs are required to periodically undergo comprehensive academic program review APR (described further in Chapter Five). The APR Guidelines describe required program review processes. Winthrop's APR guidelines and processes accommodate the needs of non-accredited academic programs, and academic programs accredited

or approved by discipline-specific organizations. Non-accredited academic programs, academic student support services, and administrative units should review best practices from their professional organizations as well as external reporting requirements from government or other agencies when articulating program and learning outcomes and appropriate assessment strategies.

Roles and responsibilities

Campus professionals across academic, administrative, and academic student support services units demonstrate their engagement with ongoing, systematic and integrated assessment, and evidence-based improvements, via the OARS 2.0. Campus professionals in academic, administrative and academic student support units are responsible for developing ***program outcomes***, designing and implementing assessment strategies to measure attainment of outcomes, and documenting how assessment results were used to improve programs. As previously noted, academic programs and relevant academic student support service programs, are also responsible for documenting articulation, assessment and evidence-based improvements associated with student learning outcomes.

Annual reports, another data source for documenting assessment initiatives, results, and evidence-based improvements, may be referenced in a program's annual OARS. Academic administrators are responsible for ensuring that their academic programs archive electronic copies of annual reports which may be requested for external review by appropriate accreditation or program review teams.

In the Division of Academic Affairs, all degree-granting programs are subject to periodic comprehensive program reviews (APR) providing a third venue for documenting assessment initiatives and evidence-based improvements. Merely gathering and reporting assessment data are insufficient to demonstrate compliance with external reporting requirements. Nor is it sufficient to report programmatic changes without explicitly providing evidence that those changes are linked to results from specific assessment initiatives or changes in external stakeholders' reporting obligations.

Chapter Three: Developing and Implementing a Program Assessment Plan, Reporting Results and Achievements, and Making Assessment-Based Improvements

Steps to develop and implement assessment plans, analyze, report and use results, and provide evidence linking assessment-based improvements and achievements to program and learning outcomes are described in Chapter Three. Colleges, academic student support services, and administrative units are expected to establish and maintain intra-unit assessment planning and review processes, assessment data management and evidence-archival systems. Institutional level data are accessed on AAAS' web site, (public reports and secured web sites for authorized users). An online data request form is available if needed information cannot be found on Winthrop's public website or through secure web sources. The following steps provide guidance in using Winthrop's OARS.

Step 1: Begin with a statement of the program mission, noting how it supports Winthrop's Institutional Mission (IM) and strategic values enumerated in the Vision of Distinction (VOD).

Step 2: Identify program goals (also called program outcomes). In OARS "**view mode**", program outcomes appear before student learning outcomes.

- Faculty, staff and administrators across disciplines, fields and institutions do not necessarily use the same terminology when discussing program and learning outcomes. A set of common terms is operationally defined, based upon the SACS COC Principles of Accreditation(see glossary).

- Units are expected to have assessment-focused meetings at least annually. Best practices recommendation is semi-annual assessment meetings at times appropriate to the type of unit (administrative, academic or educational support).

Step 3: Identify the most important student learning outcomes (SLOs), i.e., the knowledge, skills, and attitudes successful program completers demonstrate. For undergraduates, SLOs must include WU's ULCs. SLOs apply to academic programs, and, as appropriate, academic support service programs.   Administrative programs generally will not assess SLOs. Personnel in WU's TLC and AAAS assist units by providing resource information, consultancies, workshops, and small-group meetings. Institutional units use retreats, meetings, or workshop time to analyze and discuss assessment results, and make evidence-based decisions to improve programs and learning.

    Questions to consider

1. What evidence does the academic program (or academic support service program) provide that

demonstrates undergraduates are introduced to, have opportunities to practice, and demonstrate proficiency with intercultural skills, ethical judgment, evidence-based reasoning, and applied learning, espoused as essential learning outcomes (ELOs) of a liberal education ?

2. Where do academic program faculty assess senior proficiency with ULCs?

3. What evidence distinguishes *graduate-level SLOs from undergraduate SLOs* (p. 69).

Step 4: Identify useful and feasible methods to assess program and learning outcomes.

- Best practices involve using a multi-method approach including qualitative and quantitative strategies, direct and indirect metrics, internally- and externally developed.

  Questions to consider when selecting assessment methods:

  1. How will assessment results inform actions and decisions to improve programs and learning?

  2. What student artifacts will be used to demonstrate student knowledge, skills, and perspectives associated with articulated SLOs?

  3. What evidence will be collected and archived to demonstrate learning improvements and program outcome achievements?

  4. What are the benchmarks or standards (also described as levels of performance, criterion measure(s)) that program personnel define as success?

- **Direct assessment** documents what students know, skills and behaviors they demonstrate. Skills may best be evaluated using authentic student artifacts and rubrics.

  o Student artifacts: portfolios, and performances (provide rubrics documenting criteria assessed, and measurable descriptions for varying levels of proficiency) lend themselves to assessment of authentic student work using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Portfolio assessment and rubrics allow multiple raters to assess the level of performance for multiple factors or categories.

  o National Study Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) (provides institutional-level measure of ULC #2)

  o For senior-level assessment of ULCs within the degree program, AAC&U VALUE rubrics to assess students' knowledge and skill using authentic student artifacts are recommended. Link for information about acceptable use and reprint information

- ULC # 1: critical thinking, problem solving, creative thinking, quantitative reasoning

- ULC #2: civic knowledge and engagement, intercultural knowledge and competence, ethical reasoning, foundations and skills for lifelong learning

- ULC #3: global learning, intercultural knowledge and competence

- ULC #4: oral and written communication, quantitative reasoning, teamwork, and information literacy

- **Course-embedded assessment**

  o Evidence needed when using course-embedded assessment includes:

    1. A copy of the assignment instructions

    2. A clear link between assignment rubric and the learning outcome being assessed

    3. Redacted copies of completed rubrics and associated student artifacts; best practices involve student work samples assessed at varying levels of proficiency.

    4. Multiple trained raters: the assessment methods section of the OARS should indicate who, other than the instructor of record, is involved in assessment of course-generated artifacts, when the assessment occurred, the methodology used to train raters, and some evidence that inter-rater reliability was monitored

  o Using assignment grades from a single course instructor of record does not constitute course-embedded assessment.

- **Course grades** are not recognized by SACS COC as an adequate measure of specific student learning outcomes because, grades

  - *may not be useful in identifying particular areas of strength or weakness with respect to a program's learning outcomes, e.g., the ability to construct well-supported, clearly articulated and sustained arguments;*

  - *can include factors not directly related to a program's learning outcomes, such as class participation and general education outcomes, e.g., writing; and*

  - *are approached differently by individual faculty members, whose grading policies and practices vary.* Source: UVA FAQ

- **Indirect strategies** measure respondents' perceptions, or self-reported experiences.

- Surveys (e.g., focus groups, exit interviews, alumni or employer surveys) are useful to obtain feedback about programs, academic and administrative support services.

- Formatting for WU's internally-produced surveys (graduating senior survey, alumni survey) is guided by external reporting requirements.

- Externally-produced surveys

  - Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI) - PSRI 2013 results will be available fall 2013; 2007 results are online.

  - National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) - produces a variety of reports such as means and frequency comparisons, and Major Field Reports. WU last administered NSSE 1.0 in spring 2011. NSSE 2.0 will be administered in 2014. Learn more about NSSE modules, webinars (e.g., Discussion of NSSE 2.0, Linking NSSE to other institutional data, and NSSE's Psychometric Portfolio: Evidence for Reliability, Validity, and Other Quality Indicators.

Step 5: Establish a Level of Performance for the Goal or Outcome Being Measured.

Sometimes described as a *criterion measure* or *the targeted measure,* the level of performance defines proficiency or success. For both qualitative and quantitative assessment, the *level of performance* tells the reader what proportion of students are expected to perform at an operationally-defined *satisfactory level* for each student learning outcome. An example of performance level is, 75% of rising juniors satisfactorily complete interim-program portfolio requirements for (insert name of degree program).

Step 6: Communicate the Assessment Plan Using WU's reporting system, OARS.

- Program directors or their designees upload program assessment plans for the current year (academic, fiscal, or calendar) by October 1st, and complete the Online Assessment Improvement Report for the preceding year by February 15th.[5]

- College or Division Unit assessment teams review current assessment plans for their respective programs and provide feedback to program coordinators. Unit assessment teams provide evidence of their unit-based reviews (and feedback to program coordinators) to AAAS.

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[5] http://www.winthrop.edu/uploadedFiles/WU_IE_AnnualReportCycle.pdf

20130716 draft update prior editions: 2011, 2009

15

- SACS COC off- and on-site review teams are given access to all academic, administrative, and academic student support service programs' current and archived annual assessment plans and evidence-based improvement reports (OARS). For WU's fifth year interim report, due March 25, 2017, AAAS will provide SACS COC with access to annual assessment plans and improvement reports for AY 2010-11, AY 2011-12, AY 2012-13, AY 2013-14, AY 2014-15, AY 2015-16. WU will also provide access to assessment plans for AY 2016-17. Divisions following fiscal or calendar years can document their annual reporting time frame in OARS 2.0.

Step 7: Implement the Assessment Initiative.

- Implementation details for annual assessment activities are to be documented in OARS and provide answers to the following questions:

  1. **Who** will manage the assessment initiative? Who does the project manager report to, ensuring the assessment initiative is implemented as planned?

  2. **When** will specific tasks be completed (establish timelines and deadlines for every task in the assessment initiative to be completed)?

  3. **Where** will the assessment be conducted (e.g., classroom, computer lab, online, evenings/weekends, in- or outside of class)?

  4. **What** assessment tools will be used to assess student learning? **What** metrics will be used to assess program goals (outcomes)? **What** resources are needed (e.g., facilities, time, supplies, personnel) ?

- **Important Considerations**
  o Assessment project managers are responsible for coordinating and reporting the assessment initiatives and evidence-based improvements for a particular program; **completing assessment initiatives is a shared responsibility** of program personnel.

  o FERPA requires student confidentiality be protected. Document procedures for collecting, storing, and analyzing data, and the person(s) managing the data. Inform students in writing (e.g., in the syllabus), if assignments might be used for assessment of student learning outcomes after a course has ended. For consultancy assistance, contact AAAS.

  o If course-embedded assessment is planned, identify which course(s) and artifacts (e.g., papers, exams, and presentations) will be used to measure proficiency with specific learning outcomes. Select or create a rating matrix (see Scoring Guides) that will be used by multiple raters to evaluate

student deliverables originally produced for a course. Provide training to calibrate (norm) raters (facilitating inter-rater reliability) who will be using the rating matrix.

- o Consider whether to assess all students or only a sample (issues associated with cost, time, money, reliability and validity). Use caution when interpreting results from small or convenience samples.

- o Results from program-level assessment initiatives are intended for internal decision-making to improve programs and learning. Scholarly work (publications and presentations) involving assessment of student artifacts may be subject to IRB review. Programs intending to use assessment results for scholarship are expected to confer with WU's IRB committee.

- o For exit interviews, focus groups, program or course evaluations, or survey items, it is useful to develop a protocol/prompt/question list to ensure some consistency in the questions that students are addressing.

Objective Examinations

Test scores (e.g., pass rates on professional credentialing examinations) may be used as a measure of the extent to which a program outcome *(e.g., faculty design and deliver a program of study that prepares students for . . .),* is achieved*.* To assess specific student learning outcomes with tests, disaggregate the test, linking specific test items with specific learning outcomes. Proprietary examinations (e.g., field tests, PRAXIS) generally provide output reports associated with SLOs being measured. Examine sample output reports to ensure the proprietary examination under consideration will provide information relevant to the SLOs being assessed.

If a test is administered as an additional/optional expectation for students outside of required coursework, document what steps are taken to ensure students take the test seriously. Literature about "low-stakes vs. high-stakes testing" provides insight about the challenges, motivation, and assessment-value of low-stakes testing. Incentives may be a motivational strategy. [6]

Scoring Guides

Primary trait analysis (PTA) is a process faculty use to identify characteristics (traits) expected in a student deliverable (e.g., project, production, portfolio, or other student artifacts).[7] PTA facilitates conversations and achieving consensus about what should be evaluated, and the extent to which student works produced for courses and degree programs contribute to achievement of faculty-articulated SLOs.

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[6] http://www.jmu.edu/assessment/wm_library/Examinee_Motivation.pdf ;
http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/jge/summary/v057/57.2.cole.html

[7] http://www2.bakersfieldcollege.edu/courseassessment/Section_4_Assessment_Tools/Section4_6PTA.htm

Faculty initiate PTA by identifying primary traits that student deliverables should demonstrate; presumably, these traits are linked to SLOs for the program. Faculty then articulate performance levels to score each trait. Performance levels are operationally defined with text, and typically labeled categorically using either numeric ratings or qualitative descriptors, e.g., *outstanding, satisfactory, developing, not evident*. Best practice is to provide students with a copy of the PTA matrix used to evaluate a particular artifact. In-class peer- and/or self-assessment of student artifacts using the PTA matrix can be an effective learning strategy. Some fields and disciplines use the phrase, *analytical (descriptive) rubric,* to describe a PTA matrix.

While Suskie (2009) describes four broad categories of rubrics (checklists, rating scales, analytical, and holistic), only analytical rubrics provides students with optimum feedback on areas of strength and weakness, facilitating identification of improvement opportunities.[8] Analytical rubrics can be labor-intensive to develop. The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment ([NILOA](#)) provides development resources and related readings on using rubrics to make learning outcomes assessment transparent and usable. Adopting analytical rubrics developed by faculty and campus professional teams (and vetted nationally) can be an efficient and effective alternative to investing time and effort to develop analytical rubrics internally. NILOA provides examples of rubrics developed by faculty-campus teams (http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/Rubrics.htm).

Holistic rubrics differ from analytical rubrics in that raters assign a single score (e.g., 1 through 4, 5, 6, or 7) based on an overall judgment of the student's work, where 1 may mean *poor or no evidence*, mid-point scores represent constructs like *fair, developing, satisfactory, average,* and maximum scores represent constructs like *outstanding, excellent, above average*. While holistic rubrics may take less time to use than analytical rubrics, raters cannot weight the relative importance of certain criteria, and student feedback is more generic, providing less information on strengths and weaknesses.

Step 8: Tabulate, Analyze, and Report Assessment Results

After assessment data are collected and scored, results need to be summarized, presented to program faculty, staff, and administrators, and discussed in useful ways, with findings used to improve policies, procedures, teaching, and learning practices. **External accreditation organizations do not consider the assessment process complete without documented evidence that results have been used to improve programs and learning.** How results are summarized depends both on the type of data collected and on the audience. A variety of software applications are available for data analysis and management. Contact

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[8] http://condor.depaul.edu/tla/Assessment/TypesRubrics.html#analytic

unit assessment coordinators or AAAS to discuss your program's software needs.

Patterns, predictions, problems, and questions should become apparent while analyzing and summarizing the data. Questions emerge from stated learning outcomes, and may include the following:

- How (if at all) have students' knowledge and skills changed over time?
- What proportion of students fell short of, met, or exceeded defined standards, criteria, and/or expectations?
- Why did some students learn X but not Y?
- How (if at all) do learning patterns differ among student sub-groups?
- Did the assessment tool and strategy measure what you intended to measure? Are the tools and strategies likely to yield the same findings each time they are used?

Communicate Results

Focus on what will be useful and meaningful. Keep reports cogent, with a mix of visual representation of data and concise descriptions. Depending on the structure of the report and the type of data collected, establish clear connections among stated outcomes, standards/criteria, results, and analysis. Establish a mechanism (e.g., designated "assessment days" or meetings focused on assessment) for appropriate program/unit personnel to review results and making decisions based upon them.

Develop and implement a communication plan to enhance transparency and clarity among faculty, academic administrators and other campus professionals. Celebrating successes (achieving targeted performance levels) and identifying opportunities for continued improvement are equally important.

Step 9: Document Evidence-Based Accomplishments and Improvements

Internal stakeholders discuss assessment results, review program and learning outcomes in relation to assessment results, and make programmatic decisions to improve programs and learning based on the findings. Consider the following questions:

1. How did results line up with expectations? If targeted performance level was met (e.g., 70% demonstrated proficiency), discuss possible reasons why the other 30% did not demonstrate proficiency, and consider strategies to improve proficiency rate.

2. Are the established standards sufficiently rigorous? What level of performance is good enough?

Demonstrating compliance with SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1 requires moving beyond merely using assessment results to tweak an assessment tool or strategy. Disseminate assessment results widely, evaluate thoroughly, and use findings to make decisions and take actions that improve the program and student learning. Use the OARS 2.0 constructed response section labeled "Assessment-based

accomplishments and improvements" to holistically discuss how assessment results (from multiple initiatives and over time) inform achievement and outcome improvements.

Chapter Four: University-Level Competencies (ULCs) and Quality Enhancement Plans

University level Competencies ULCs

Winthrop used results from a multi-year campus-wide qualitative and quantitative assessment initiative to articulate four undergraduate ULCs, adopted by Faculty Conference in October 2010. The process, documented in a series of reports, involved faculty and student life committee members of a University Wide Academic Assessment Committee (UWAAC) examining assessment results and improvement reports from WU's OARS (AY 2007-08 and 2008-09), considering potential undergraduate competencies in the context of The Essential Outcomes of AAC&U's Core Commitments, the 2009 report, *Leveraging Higher Education for a Stronger South Carolina,* and employer-desired skills aligned to the AAC&U Essential Outcomes that emerged from the 2010 Hart Research Associates study employer survey commissioned by AAC&U. [9]

Following the March 2012 publication of *Transparency and Accountability: an evaluation of the VSA College Portrait Pilot,* the VSA announced member institutions could report student learning on their CP web sites based upon assessment of authentic student artifacts using AAC&U VALUE rubrics for critical thinking and writing. During spring 2013, University College piloted the AAC&U Critical Thinking rubric as part of its senior writing assessment initiative. Campus professionals are encouraged to consider using AAC&U VALUE rubrics for program-based ULC assessment.

Institutional-Level Assessment of University-Level Competencies

The Office of Accreditation, Accountability and Academic Services (AAAS) integrates institutional-level assessment of student proficiency into its multi-year cycle of institutional studies (see Table Three below). AAAS supports achievement of WU's mission by providing institutional data and findings from institutional studies and assessment to:

- Support evidence-based planning, decision making, and accountability processes
- Support regional and specialized program accreditation efforts
- Provide student and faculty academic support services in the areas of records, registration, and academic space and scheduling

Table Three: Portion of AAAS 10-year cycle of institutional studies

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[9] 2013 updated HART employer survey http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/2013_EmployerSurvey.pdf

20130716 draft update prior editions: 2011, 2009

			2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
External	AAC&U VALUE Rubrics (ULCs #1-#4) ETS PP	**Direct**	ETS PP For ULCs # 1-#4, College Portraits & SACS CS 3.3.1.1 and CS 3.5.1	ETS PP learning gains rpt WU's CP-VSA SLO Transition to AAC&U rubrics (critical thinking & writing) for VSA-CP. University College Senior Writing Assessment pilot May 2013	Migration to AAC&U VALUE rubrics – institutional level senior assessment	VSA-College Portraits SLO update for critical thinking and writing	AAC&U VALUE rubrics – institutional level senior assessment
	NSLVE-Tufts			Spring (sp)	TBD	TBD	TBD
	CSRDE-ACT			7-year retention study	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4
	PSRI	**Indirect**		Sp13		sp15	
	NSSE		NSSE12 Pilot 2.0 + modules, (ULC #2 & 3)		NSSE 2.0 + modules		NSSE 2.0 + modules
Internal	Senior Survey		Dec, Apr-May	Dec, Apr-May	Dec, Apr-May	Dec, Apr-May	Dec, Apr-May
	Alumni Survey		May-June 2012	June 2013	June14	June15	June16

Table Four below summarizes institutional-level assessment initiatives that inform the extent to which successful completers of Winthrop's baccalaureate degree programs demonstrate knowledge, skills and habits of mind associated with Winthrop's university-level competencies.

Table Four: Institutional-Level Assessment of University-Level Competencies

	Institutional-level Direct Assessment			Institutional-level Indirect Assessment		
	Instrument	**Administered**	**Reports Conveyed**	**Instrument**	**Administered**	**Reports Conveyed**
ULC # 1 Critical Thinking	ETS PP - Abbreviated form In 2013, replaced with AAC&U Critical Thinking VALUE rubric	Fall 2011 ACAD 101 FY cohort; spring 2012 senior (SR) cohort during SR capstone experiences	May-June 2012 findings conveyed to Executive Officers (EOs) and Academic Leadership Council (ALC) who convey to their units	NSSE11 items WU results compared to national NSSE cohort & Carnegie cohort. NSSE 2.0 (spring 2014)	Spring 2011	November 2011 findings conveyed to EOs and ALC who in turn convey findings to their unit personnel
ULC # 2 PSR	National Study of Voting, Learning and Engagement (NSLVE)	spring 2013	fall 2013	Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI)	spring 2013	fall 2013 - to EOs and ALC who in turn convey findings to their unit personnel.

	Institutional-level Direct Assessment			Institutional-level Indirect Assessment		
	Instrument	Administered	Reports Conveyed	Instrument	Administered	Reports Conveyed
				NSSE 2.0 Civic Engagement Module	Spring 2012	Fall 2013 (after confidentiality embargo lifted)
ULC # 3 Inter-connectedness				NSSE 11 Selected items	Spring 2011	Fall 2011
				Penultimate NSSE 2.0	Spring 2012	Fall 2013 (after confidentiality embargo lifted)
				NSSE 2.0 Diversity Module	Spring 2012	Fall 2013 (after confidentiality embargo lifted)
	GLI questionnaire Knowledge & engagement elements	Internally-developed, piloted summer 2011	Results to be reported in 5th year impact report to SACS COC (due 20170325)	GLI questionnaire Attitudinal elements	Internally-developed, piloted during summer 2011	Results to be reported in 5th year impact report to SACS COC (due 20170325)
ULC # 4 Communication (written, oral, other)	ETS PP - Abbreviated form	fall 2011 ACAD 101, spring 2012 senior cohort during	May-June 2012 results conveyed to EOs and ALC who in turn convey findings to their unit personnel.	NSSE11 Selected items Externally developed instrument WU results compared to national annual NSSE cohort.	Spring 2011	November 2011 findings will be conveyed to EOs and ALC

Program-level assessment of ULCs

In addition to Winthrop conducting institutional-level assessment of ULCs, faculty, staff, and administrators in baccalaureate degree programs are responsible for assessing the extent to which their senior baccalaureate-degree candidates demonstrate achievement of the university-level competencies. Program faculty are encouraged to consider adopting AAC&U VALUE rubrics (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) to assess senior baccalaureate-degree candidates' achievements with the ULCs using authentic student artifacts. The AAC&U VALUE rubrics were developed as part of its Liberal Education and America's Promise initiative with support by grants from The State Farm Companies Foundation and the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), the formal project ran from May 2007 through April 2010. (Source: http://www.aacu.org/value/project_description.cfm .)

Winthrop's Inaugural Quality Enhancement Plan: The Global Learning Initiative (GLI)

SACS COC 2004 revisions included a new obligation for institutions to develop five-year quality enhancement plans. SACS COC quality enhancement plan guidelines enable institutions to demonstrate compliance with Core Requirement (CR) 2.12, *The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that includes an institutional process for identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment and focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution,* and Comprehensive Standard (CS) 3.3.2, *The institution has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan that (1) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP; (2) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP; and (3) identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement.* At the conclusion of the five-year period following SACS COC approval of the QEP proposal, the institution submits a QEP Impact Report to SACS COC. A SACS COC team reviews the fifth year QEP Impact Report and rules on its adequacy. The report may be accepted, or referred to C&R (Compliance and Reports) Committee for review and/or action. Actions may include requiring an institution to provide additional monitoring reports to demonstrate progress on its QEP, or the imposition of sanctions.

Winthrop's inaugural quality enhancement plan, the Global Learning Initiative (GLI), was approved as part of WU's 2011 decennial reaffirmation process. The GLI is designed to integrate global learning intentionally into the Touchstone (general education) Program. Based upon feedback from SACS COC on site reaffirmation team (April 2011), the GLI SLOs were revised (from the five SLOs articulated in the spring 2011 GLI proposal) to the three SLOs listed below, to better reflect the intended global learning outcomes.

- **SLO 1: Global Knowledge.** Seniors will demonstrate significantly greater global knowledge than beginning freshmen.
- **SLO 2: Global Attitudes.** Seniors' attitudes will demonstrate a greater acceptance of cultural difference than those of beginning freshmen.
- **SLO 3: Global Engagement.** Seniors will engage in diverse intercultural groups and settings more often and more effectively than beginning freshmen.

Winthrop's inaugural QEP Impact Report is due on March 25, 2017 along with the university's Fifth Year Interim Report. The GLI proposal, executive summary, professional development resources, committees, Global Learning Cultural Events Assessment form, current and archived news and events are available on WU's GLI web site.

Institutional-level assessment of the GLI is managed through **University College** which is assessing GLI learning outcomes at three points, in ACAD 101, HMXP 102 and in the senior year, using multiple strategies.   University College assesses GLI SLOs using the GLI questionnaire (an internally-developed instrument measuring knowledge and engagement (skill/behaviors), a global learning cultural events assessment form, and assessment of senior writing samples for GLI knowledge and dispositions (habits of mind/attitudes) associated with the GLI learning outcomes. University College is also assessing program outcomes associated with the GLI using a variety of methodologies such as the number of cultural events with a global component, the number of students who study abroad, and GLI questionnaire items associated with International Peer Mentors.

AAAS administers two institutional-level surveys (NSSE and the graduating senior survey) that yield indirect measures associated with respondents' self-reported experiences with Winthrop's global learning opportunities**.**

While WU's current quality enhancement plan, the GLI, is associated with global learning in the Touchstone (General Education) program, academic degree programs and academic student support services may also choose to integrate their assessment of ULC # 3 *Winthrop graduates understand the interconnected nature of the world and the time in which they live* with relevant programming associated with global learning.

Chapter Five

Comprehensive Program Review

Academic Program Review

The purpose of Academic Program Review (APR) is to ensure that Winthrop University continues a leadership role in offering national-caliber academic programs consistent with emerging best practices. The goal is to provide both qualitative and quantitative analyses for demonstrating accountability and institutional effectiveness. Results from reviews are used to enhance program quality and inform resource allocations.

Winthrop University has undertaken APR since the 1980s. The guidelines for conducting APR were initially developed at the state level by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) with input from academic officers at each of the public higher education institutions. Until December 2000, CHE coordinated a statewide review of academic offerings in disciplines that did not have specialized accrediting entities. State budget cuts forced the Commission to abandon all such reviews except those related to teacher certification or teacher advancement. In March 2010, CHE was forced to dissolve its partnership with the SC Department of Education and NCATE. Winthrop continues the practice of program review, conducting both internal and external reviews. Winthrop's APR guidelines are updated biennially, current guidelines were updated in 2013. APR documents and forms are available online. WU processes and formats for APR will accommodate reporting requirements of specialized (discipline-based) accreditation or approval reporting requirements. APR timelines for 2010 through 2020 are published.

APR follows a five- to seven-year cycle in which academic units conduct a self-study to assess major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and concerns in the areas of quality, demand, and resources. Programs with specialized accreditation or certification coordinate their review with the specialized organization review. A unit conducts the self-study during the first year with the peer review and presentation of findings occurring the following year.

APR requires collaboration among various units and offices of the University and individuals from the community. The planning of successful reviews involves shared responsibilities and includes all major stakeholders. Implementation of improvement based upon APR findings becomes a matter of mutual accountability. The list of responsibilities articulated on the APR roles and responsibilities web site, http://www2.winthrop.edu/public/programreview/roles.aspx, is a broad overview of actions to be completed during an APR; it is not meant to be comprehensive in scope.

Appendix

Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement

Section Four: Federal Requirements (pgs. 89-100)

The U.S. Secretary of Education recognizes accreditation by the Commission on Colleges in establishing the eligibility of higher education institutions to participate in programs authorized under Title IV of the 1998 Higher Education Amendments and other federal programs. Through its periodic review of institutions of higher education, the Commission assures the public that it is a reliable authority on the quality of education provided by its member institutions.

The federal statute includes mandates that the Commission review an institution in accordance with criteria outlined in the regulations of the Amendments developed by the U.S. Department of Education. As part of the review process, institutions are required to document compliance with those criteria and the Commission is obligated to consider such compliance when the institution is reviewed for initial membership or continued accreditation.

Implicit in every Federal Requirement mandating a policy or procedure is the expectation that the policy or procedure is in writing and has been approved through appropriate institutional processes, published in appropriate institutional documents accessible to those affected by the policy or procedure, and implemented and enforced by the institution.

4.1 The institution evaluates success with respect to student achievement including, as appropriate, consideration of course completion, state licensing examinations, and job placement rates. (Student achievement)

4.2 The institution's curriculum is directly related and appropriate to the purpose and goals of the institution and the diplomas, certificates, or degrees awarded. (Program curriculum appropriate for intended purpose)

4.3 The institution makes available to students and the public current academic calendars, grading policies, and refund policies. (Publication of policies)

4.4 Program length is appropriate for each of the institution's educational programs. (Program length)

4.5 The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints. (See Commission policy "Complaint Procedures against the Commission or its Accredited Institutions.") (Student complaints)

4.6 Recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution's practices and policies. (Recruitment materials)

4.7 The institution is in compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the 1998 Higher Education Amendments. (In reviewing the institution's compliance with these program responsibilities, the Commission relies on documentation forwarded to it by the U.S. Department of Education.) (Title IV program responsibilities)

4.8 An institution that offers distance or correspondence education documents each of the following: (Distance and correspondence education, pp. 98-99)

> **4.8.1** demonstrates that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit by **verifying the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using, at the option of the institution, methods such as (a) a secure login and pass code, (b) proctored examinations, or (c) new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification**.
>
> **4.8.2** has a **written procedure for protecting the privacy of students enrolled in distance and correspondence education** courses or programs.
>
> **4.8.3** has a **written procedure distributed at the time of registration or enrollment** that notifies students of any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity

4.9 The institution has policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded for courses and programs that conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education and to Commission policy. (See Commission policy "Credit Hours.") (Definition of credit hours) (added 20120101) (Cross-reference with C.R. 2.7, C.S. 3.4.6, and F.R. 4.4 p. 100)

Glossary of Terms

The Glossary of Terms contains a number of definitions adapted from assessment resources developed by other institutions and entities. The major resources listed below were used to compile the present glossary. The resources listed below are neither comprehensive nor exhaustive.

- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS COC). *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*. 2012 edition.
- Eaton, Judith S. 2009. An Overview of U.S. Accreditation. Washington DC: Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).
- Office of Institutional Assessment and Compliance. Assessment Glossary. University of South Carolina, http://www.ipr.sc.edu/effectiveness/toolbox/glossary.htm
- Office for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning. Glossary of Assessment Terms and Links to more Information. College of Charleston, http://oiep.cofc.edu

Academic Program Review (APR) – Evaluation of the effectiveness of an academic degree program involving an internal self-study, an external review, and a variety of indicators. All academic programs are required to complete periodic program reviews (generally every 5-7 years). Programs with specialized accreditation or approval may use the specialized program review process to meet their obligation for periodic APR. AAAS is the university's repository for all academic program review documents including self-studies, external review reports, and follow up reports.

Accreditation – A certification awarded by an external, recognized organization, that the institution or program meets certain requirements overall, or in a particular discipline. SACS accreditation requires that all programs and services wherever offered within the context of the institution's activity are reviewed as part of the institutional effectiveness process.

Aggregated Data – Statistics which relate to broad classes, groups, or categories, so that it is not possible to distinguish the properties of individuals within those classes, groups, or categories. Aggregated data should be collected for program or unit level assessment.

Assessment – The ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning and institutional effectiveness; the systematic collection, review and use of information about educational programs and administrative units undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning, development, and institutional effectiveness. While SACS does not imply that all elements of the system must be undertaken simultaneously or even annually, the various activities of the institution's planning and evaluation system are scheduled at periodic intervals that make sense for the institution and its mission. The results of diverse assessment efforts can be integrated to provide a sound basis for plans aimed at institutional improvement.

Assessment Plan – The portion of the OARS template in which respondents articulate their program mission, explain how it links to the university and college (or division) mission, document their program outcomes (required for all academic, administrative and student support services) and their student learning . **Improvement Plan** – The portion of the OARS in which respondents present data, and discuss how assessment results were used to improve learning or programs.

Assessment Plan and Improvement Report template – Winthrop's **O**nline **A**ssessment plans and improvement **R**eporting **S**ystem (OARS) is the standardized template used by administrative, academic, and academic student support service units to document evidence of their unit's or program's annual and multi-year assessment initiatives associated with both program and student learning outcomes. The OARS 2.0 contains a series of drop-down menus and constructed response reporting sections the designated program assessment coordinator completes at least twice a year. By October, all units are expected to have uploaded/updated their assessment plans for the current academic year. By mid-February, all units are expected to have uploaded/finalized their assessment reports for the preceding academic year (calendar or fiscal years may be referenced for administrative units if preferred). After February 15th, assessment and improvement reports from the preceding academic year are archived (no additional editing, but view access remains). WU transitioned to OARS 2.0 in 2011-12. Contact AAAS for assistance with OARS 2.0.

Benchmark – A point of reference for comparisons. Higher education lacks consensus on how the word is used for assessment or evaluative purposes. Performance data (from a discipline, past reviews, other institutions, etc.) can be utilized to create a baseline of acceptable performance or to create a standard

to strive for when setting target levels of performance. For assessment purposes, provide an explanation of the word, *benchmark*, is being used.

Best Practice – strategies, methods, approaches which, over time, are recognized as optimal approaches to achieve a desired outcome.

Bloom's Taxonomy of learning – a 1956 learning schema proffered Benjamin Bloom and colleagues featuring student learning at increasing levels complexity. 1956 version was revised in 2001, and more recent adaptations integrate [digital-action verbs](#).

Coherence – A critical component of a program which should demonstrate an appropriate sequencing of courses, not a mere bundling of credits, so that the student learning is progressively more advanced in terms of assignments and scholarship required and demonstrates progressive advancement in a field of study that allows students to integrate knowledge and grow in critical skills.

Cohort – A group whose progress is followed by means of measurements at different points in time. A group of persons sharing a particular statistical or demographic characteristic.

Competency – Level at which performance is acceptable.

Course Embedded Assessment – Assessment methods designed to be a part of the curricular structure and take place in the normal operation of the class e.g., tests, portfolios, papers, etc.

Criteria – relevant measures that will be used; state precisely what student or support unit will be doing; explain the conditions under which student learning outcomes and program goals should be accomplished; states an acceptable level of aggregate performance.

Criterion-referenced – A test or other type of assessment designed to provide a measure of performance that is interpretable in terms of a clearly defined and delimited domain of learning tasks. Criterion-referenced assessments report how well academic programs and administrative support units are doing relative to a pre-determined performance level on a specified set of program goals or student

learning outcomes. Criterion-referenced assessments determine what test takers can do and what they know, not how they compare to others.

Curriculum Mapping – Demonstrate where in the program's curriculum learning outcomes are introduced, practiced, and proficiency demonstrated. Mapping outcomes tracks how students develop skills and knowledge (in courses and extra-curricular experiences) required for programs of study.

Direct Assessment Measures – Examination or observation of student knowledge or skills against measurable student learning outcomes. Require students to display their knowledge and skills as they respond to the instrument itself.

Effectiveness – Extent to which an institution, division, department meets its unique mission.

Externally-developed Assessment – Commercially available; instruments developed by consortia or organizations

Focus Group – A carefully planned discussion to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment. Conducted with ~ 7-12 people by a skilled interviewer.

Formative Assessment – Intended to assess ongoing program-project activity and provide information to improve the project. Assessment feedback is short term in duration.

General Education – Winthrop's Touchstone Program - A collegiate level general education program should 1) be a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, 2) ensure breadth of knowledge, and 3) be based on a coherent rationale. It is essential to understand the general education component of the degree program within the context of the institution's mission and within the expectations of a college-level institution. Through general education, students encounter the basic content and methodology of the principal areas of knowledge: humanities and fine arts, social and behavioral sciences, and natural sciences and mathematics.

Goal - Measurable outcomes that define how the institution/division/unit expects to fulfill its mission.

High-stakes Testing - A test which has important consequences for the test taker. A high-stakes test can have a major impact on a student's academic career. The outcome of the test can mean the difference of receiving or not receiving a passing grade, a scholarship, a degree, an internship, etc. Compare to low-stakes testing.

Indirect Assessment Measures – perceptions of learning or experiences rather than actual demonstrations of learning outcome achievement (e.g., surveys of students, alumni, employers)

Institutional Assessment – Evaluation of the extent to which the university is achieving its strategic values, strategic initiatives and annual objectives.

Institutional Effectiveness (IE) – The systematic, explicit, and documented process of measuring performance against mission in all aspects of an institution. All programs, services, and constituencies are included; IE process is linked to decision making (including budgeting) processes at all levels.

Inter-rater reliability – the extent to which multiple raters consistently implement/apply a rating system.

SACS Comprehensive Standard 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

      3.3.1.2 administrative support services

      3.3.1.3 educational support services

      3.3.1.4 research within its educational mission, if appropriate

      3.3.1.5 community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate

Internally-developed – developed by Winthrop University faculty, staff, and/or administrators.

Learning Outcomes – A statement that describes the measurable skills, knowledge, and attitudes that students should be able to demonstrate as a result of the course or program. Learning outcomes should be specific, measureable, agreed upon, realistic, and time framed.

Longitudinal Assessment –collect data from the same population at different points in time.

Low-stakes Testing – A test which has little to no impact on a student. A low-stakes test is typically used to assess the progress of students or the effectiveness of teaching methodologies, resources, etc. but is not used in figuring a student's grade in a course. Students may not take a test seriously if they believe the outcome of the test has little or no impact on them.

Methods – Describes how and when the outcomes will be assessed, and who will conduct the assessment; describes how assessment data will be disseminated to faculty and staff as appropriate.

Mission Statement – The mission statement is usually a short, one paragraph general explanation of what the program is, and why the program exists. Program and unit missions should demonstrate alignment with both the institutional mission and the Vision of Distinction ([VOD) strategic values](#).

Norm-Reference – A test or other type of assessment designed to provide a measure of performance that is interpretable in the context of an individual's or group's relative standing in some known group. A norm-referenced test is designed to highlight achievement differences between and among groups in order to produce a dependable rank order across a continuum of achievement from high achievers to low achievers.

Online Assessment plan and Improvement Reporting System (OARS) – Winthrop's standardized and centralized application to aggregate program assessment plans and reports. The OAR application includes: program contact information, space to link program mission with the University mission and strategic values articulated in the Vision of Distinction, program and student learning outcomes, assessment strategies, targeted levels of performance, assessment results, and evidence of assessment-based improvements and accomplishments associated with the program and learning outcomes.

Peer Review – Accreditation review is conducted primarily by faculty and administrative peers in the profession. These colleagues review the self-study and serve on visiting teams that review institutions and programs after the self-study is completed. Peers constitute the majority of members of the accrediting commissions or boards that make judgments about accrediting status.

Periodic External Review – Institutions and programs continue to be reviewed over time. They normally prepare a self-study and undergo a site visit each time.

Portfolio – Collections of multiple student work samples usually compiled over time and rated using rubrics. The design of the portfolio is dependent upon how the scoring results are going to be used.

Performance/Plan Evaluation – A systematic technique for gathering data through observation of behavior or process and evaluating the data based on a clearly articulated set of performance criteria; can be used for both students and personnel.

Program Outcomes – SACS-required for administrative, academic and educational support units. Program outcomes may also be described by some units as program goals. For SACS reporting in the Online Assessment Reporting System, Winthrop uses the label, *program outcomes.*

Qualitative Assessment – relies on description rather than numerical scores or ratings. The emphasis is on the measurement of opinions, reflections and/or judgments. Examples include interview, focus groups, and observations.

Quantitative Assessment – relies on numerical scores or ratings. The emphasis is on the use of statistics, cumulative numbers, aggregated data, and numerical measurements.

Sampling

> **Convenience Sample** – sample drawn from volunteers who are readily available and willing to participate in the study. Results have low external validity and should not be used for high stakes decisions.
>
> **Random Sample** – A sample drawn from the population such that every member of the population has an equal and independent opportunity to be included in the sample. Requires more resources than convenience sampling. Appropriate for high stakes decisions (medical trials associated with pharmacological or other therapeutic protocols, expensive investments).

Reliability – Reliability is the extent to which an experiment, test, or any measuring procedure yields the same result on repeated trials.

Rubric – A primary trait analysis (PTA) matrix that describes categories of information, criteria, knowledge, skills (behaviors) or perspectives being evaluated, and measurable descriptions of multiple (at least two) levels of performance for each category.

SACS COC

- SACS COC [Resource Manual for Principles of Accreditation (Updated February 2013)](#)
- [Credit Hours Policy Statement (edited January 2012)](#)
- [Distance and Correspondence Education (edited January 2012)](#)
- Final report of the Commission on the [Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education](#)
- Guidelines for addressing [distance and correspondence education, evaluators guide](#) (Approved December 2011)

Self-study – Institutions and programs prepare a written summary of performance, based on accrediting organizations' standards.

Site visit – an external review by peers who visit campus to affirm and clarify findings reported in an internal self-study. External Review Teams (ERT) may also include public members (non-academics who have an interest in higher education). See WU's [APR guidelines](#) for more information.

Strategic Values – Six Winthrop goals documented in the [Vision of Distinction](#) and whose nature and character are described more fully in [The Winthrop Plan](#).

Summative Assessment – An assessment that is done at the conclusion of a course or some larger instructional period (e.g., at the end of the program). The purpose is to determine success or to what extent the program/project/course met its goals and learning outcomes.

Tracking/Reporting – Quantitative method for evaluating program effectiveness and for systematic direct comparison.

Third Party – Person(s) other than those directly involved in the educational process (e.g., employers, parents, consultants).

Touchstone Program – WU's distinctive foundational academic experience. Four courses form the Touchstone Core. [Winthrop's Touchstone Program](#) consists of the University's general education requirements.

Use of Results – Evidence-based actions that demonstrate how specific results from completed assessment activities were used to make decisions, inform strategic planning, program evaluation and improvement.   Reporting plans to use results in the future does not demonstrate compliance with SACS standard (C.S. 3.3.1) to provide evidence that assessment results were used and are linked to improvements and accomplishments (sometimes described as *closing the loop).*

Validity –Extent to which a method or study accurately reflects or assesses the specific outcome that is being measured.

Value-added (growth or pre-post) – Compares results against student scores when they started or entered the program to the end of the program or course of study; student learning is demonstrated by determining how much students have gained through participation in the program.

Variable – Observable characteristics that vary among individual responses.

Electronic Resource List

Accountability

- 2013-14 http://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess120_2013-2014/bills/266.htm

Administrative and Academic Student Support Services Assessment

- Administrative and University Life Assessment Tracking System George Mason

- Administrative assessment, Florida Gulf Coast University

- Administrative assessment guidelines, University of Southern Mississippi (USM)

- Administrative Unit Assessment Handbook, University of Central Florida

- Assessment Handbook for Administrative/Educational Support Units, Western Carolina

- Assessment Resources for Administrative and Support Units, Florida Atlantic University

- Rubrics to evaluate assessment plans and improvement reports for administrative and academic units OLEMISS

Association of American Colleges and Universities assessment resources (AAC&U)

- Core Commitments: Educating students for personal and social responsibility

- Inventory for PSRI

- Technical Guide for Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI)

- Civic Learning

- Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education

College level competencies

- Winthrop's **University-Level Competencies** (ULCs)

- AAC&U **Essential Learning Outcomes**: Liberal Education America's Promise (LEAP)

- 20130410 AAC&U **Employer Survey** priorities for a liberal education

- SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1 (February 2013 update Resource Manual, pp. 65-66)

- Measures of college level competencies

  - Student artifacts – AAC&U Rubrics Valid Assessment of Undergraduate Education (or alternative rubrics)

  - Pass rates on professional credentialing examinations (SACS F.R. 4.1, p.93)

- o Indirect feedback from surveys (graduating senior survey, alumni survey, National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI)
- o Global Learning Initiative questionnaire, p. 7.

COC SACs 2012 (updated February 2013) SACS COC Principles of Accreditation Resource Manual

- http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/Resource%20Manual.pdf
- adequacy of qualified full time program faculty (CR 2.8, pg. 24; CS 3.7.1, pp. 72-72)

  WU data sources: PICS, Activity Insight

  Contact college dean or unit assessment coordinator for more information
- distance and online learning (CR 2.9, p. 25; CS 3.4.6., pp. 59-60; FR 4.8, pp. 98-99)

  WU policy http://www2.winthrop.edu/public/policy/fullpolicy.aspx?pid=57
- verification of students (FR 4.8, pp. 98-99)
- definition of credit hours (CS 3.4.9., p. 60; FR 4.9, pp. 99-100)

  WU policy http://www2.winthrop.edu/public/policy/fullpolicy.aspx?pid=301

USDE College Affordability and Completion http://www.ed.gov/college-completion

SC Commission on Higher Education South Carolina data and publications

Discipline-based SLO examples

- **2008 The History Major and Undergraduate Liberal Education**

  http://www.historians.org/pubs/Free/TheHistoryMajorandUndergraduateEducation.pdf

Educational attainment: U.S. Census Bureau

- 2012 http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/cps/2012/tables.html
- 2011 http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/cps/2011/tables.html
- 2010 http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/cps/2010/tables.html

Examples of evidence-based improvements to programs and learning University of Virginia

Graduate Enrollment and Degrees http://www.cgsnet.org/graduate-enrollment-and-degrees

Higher Education Commission Report (2006)

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA)

- Assessment Journals

- Assessment tool kit e.g., curriculum mapping, benchmarking and portfolio

- Resources

  o Blaich, C. F., & Wise, K. S. (2011, January). *From gathering to using assessment results: Lessons from the Wabash National Study* (NILOA Occasional Paper No.8). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.

  o Ethics and Assessment

  o Ewell, P., Paulson, K., & Kinzie, J. (2011). *Down and in: assessment practices at the program level*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA)

  o Hutchings, P. (2011, April). *What new faculty need to know about assessment* (NILOA Assessment Brief: Faculty). Urbana, IL: University for Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

  o Jankowski, N. A., Ikenberry, S. O., Kinzie, J., Kuh, G. D., Shenoy, G. F., & Baker, G. R. (2012). *Transparency & accountability: An evaluation of the VSA college portrait pilot.* Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA)

  o NILOA assessment briefs: faculty; student affairs

  o NILOA examples of good assessment practices; presentations

  o Swing, R. L., & Coogan, C. S. (2010, May). *Valuing assessment: Cost-benefit considerations* (NILOA Occasional Paper No.5). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.

  o Schuh, J. H., & Gansemer-Topf, A. M. (2010, December). *The role of student affairs in student learning assessment* (NILOA Occasional Paper No.7). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

- WU NSSE web site, http://www2.winthrop.edu/effectiveness/nsse/ (NSSE11 results, next administration will be NSSE 2.0 in spring 2014)
- NSSE 2.0 Engagement Indicators
- NSSE Psychometric portfolio: a framework for presenting studies of the validity, reliability, and other indicators of quality of NSSE's data.
- NSSE – Voluntary System of Accountability items associated with group learning, active learning, experiences with diverse groups of people and ideas
- NSSE Webinars

Success: Retention and Completion

   http://media.act.org/documents/ACT_RR2012-5.pdf

Transparency

- WU Common Data Set (CDS)
- WU Facts and Information (F&I)
    - o Credit Hour Production
    - o Enrollment
    - o IPDES Data Feedback Reports
    - o Student Profiles (undergraduate and graduate enrollment by college, demographics by race and gender, geographic distribution)
- Institutional Dashboards

   2012   Terkla D.G., Sharkness, J., Cohen, M., Roscoe, H., & Wiseman, M., *Institutional Dashboards: Navigational Tool for Colleges and Universities,*

   http://www.airweb.org/EducationAndEvents/Publications/Documents/123.pdf

- Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System Data Center (IPEDS)
    - o College Navigator WU
- SC State Accountability Reports (archives)
- Rankings and Recognition
- Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA)
    - o Student Experiences (based upon WU NSSE results)
    - o Student Learning

Winthrop University

- University Mission

- University's Strategic Values (Vision Of Distinction)

- Accreditation, Accountability, and Academic Services

    o Accountability http://www.winthrop.edu/accountability/default.aspx?id=7996

    o Common Data Set http://www.winthrop.edu/accountability/default.aspx?id=11925

    o Facts and Information http://www.winthrop.edu/accountability/default.aspx?id=20545

        ▪ IPEDS Data Feedback Reports

        ▪ Student profiles

        ▪ Enrollment

        ▪ Credit Hour Production

        ▪ Completions

        ▪ Archived Fact Books

    o Data Request form http://www.winthrop.edu/ADMSReports/

    o Office of Assessment

    o Accreditation SACSCOC

- University College ([UC](UC))

- Teaching and Learning Center ([TLC](TLC))

- Institutional Review Board ([IRB](IRB))