

GUIDELINES AND FORMAT FOR SUBMISSION OF ANNUAL STATUS REPORTS

The annual status reports on outcomes assessment activities are integral to CSUSB's commitment to continuous program improvement and student learning. Each program is required to submit an update on its outcomes assessment activities for the prior academic year. A report outlining the assessment findings, results and implementation activities are due each Fall quarter.

Programs whose plans have not yet been approved by the University Outcomes Assessment Committee should submit a report detailing its current status, e.g. the state of development of the assessment plan and what remains to complete it.

In 1994 the Faculty Senate at California State University, San Bernardino resolved that the university should "proceed in developing concepts of outcomes assessment as an important step for providing the effectiveness of our academic programs." (FSD 94-01) Since that time we have engaged in the establishment of outcomes assessment practices that support our academic mission and our commitment to providing programs of the highest quality for our students.

The purpose of outcomes assessment at CSUSB, therefore, is not to compare programs, to point fingers at programmatic problems, or to publish scorecards. Quality assessment promotes continuous improvement at all levels of the university by providing the necessary evidence to guide effective decision making in many areas--programmatic changes, classroom teaching modifications, support service modifications, policy or procedure changes, structural reorganization. A comprehensive, systematic, and ongoing assessment program will make continuous improvement possible.

A quality assessment program answers three related questions:

- I. What are we trying to do?
- II. How well are we doing it?
- III. How--using these answers--can we improve what we are doing?

A quality assessment program is geared to answer these three questions in the clearest means possible. Likewise, your assessment report should address these questions in an organized, detailed manner geared toward informing an audience comprised of colleagues in your program and faculty across the campus.

An assessment report should present results in a way that is useful to the audience who will read it, and should examine results as well as the assessment process, itself. Including direct quotes from surveys and interview and focus group participants makes qualitative reports more useful documents because the "voice" of the participants is powerful and genuine. The report should clarify what was done, why it was done, and what was found. Program strengths and weaknesses should be identified in a balanced way, and the focus should be on program improvement, not on identifying scapegoats. Listed below are some over-arching questions, followed by guidelines specific to each section of the report to guide you in its completion:

What were we trying to accomplish by using assessment in our department?

What assessment methods did we use? Why did we select these?

Did we have a positive or negative experience implementing these methods?

What were the students' reactions to the assessment process?

Was our experience with assessment what we expected? Why/why not?

What did we find especially effective in our assessment process?

What did we particularly dislike about our process?

What would we change about our process? Why?

What will we do again? Why?

What were the most valuable things we learned?

What are the three or four most important things we would like to share with others about our experience with assessment?

How will what we have learned from our assessment affect what we do with our department's courses and/or with program requirements?

What do our results suggest for program review on our campus?

COMPLETING THE ASSESSMENT REPORT

I. ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES. As you complete this section of the report, keep in mind that a quality assessment program is:

1. Systematic and ongoing. It is an orderly and open method of acquiring evidence over time.
2. Cumulative. Early efforts are normally not definitive. Over time, however, assessment efforts will build a body of evidence that can be used in increasingly sophisticated ways to improve programs.
3. Multi-faceted. Evidence is obtained on multiple dimensions using multiple methods and multiple sources. Because human and organizational behavior is complex, no single measure can be thought of as definitive.

II. ASSESSMENT RESULTS. As you complete this section keep in mind that a quality assessment program analyzes its findings and as it does so:

1. Selects and uses appropriate procedures for analysis of the data, being sure to employ both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Both are needed to present a well-balanced picture of the program. Also be sure to consider the various audiences who will use the data. The analysis and reporting procedures should vary by audience.
2. Prepares written statements, which identify and elaborate upon the most significant pros and cons of the academic program. A good way to organize the data presented is in relation to identified goals.
3. Develops recommendations based on analysis of the data, again, using the identified goals as the framework for presenting the recommendations.

III. IMPLEMENTATION: USE OF FINDINGS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT. A quality assessment program is pragmatic. Information is used to improve the campus environment. Assessment is not simply the acquisition of information. If the information is not used to some purpose, the assessment will have failed. An effective (program of assessment, therefore, focuses on the accumulation, analysis and use of information to improve the educational environment of the University.

This does not mean, however, that we must create a multitude of innovative assessment measures to build a quality program. Accrediting agencies do not require a plethora of unique mechanisms to substantiate the conclusion that a particular campus program possesses an outstanding program of assessment; neither should we demand such efforts from our colleagues, or ourselves especially during a time when scant resources exist. Indeed, we anticipate that the academic and support communities will rely heavily on information sources, methods of analysis, and uses already in existence.

IV. TIME-LINE AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES. A quality assessment program develops and implements a plan to carry out the recommendations that includes systematic ongoing assessment and identification of goals. To do this you will need to:

1. Define the tasks to be done in relation to agreed-upon goals.
2. Assign the tasks to appropriate individuals and groups.
3. Establish a flexible time line.

Define the ongoing assessment and goal identification process, as well as the reporting and monitoring procedures to be used as the recommendations implemented.

(Guidelines adapted from the assessment Websites and handbooks at CSUs Chico and Bakersfield.)

