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| Detailed Instructions for Certificate and Minor Assessment Reports  Cycle: 2023-2024 |
| **Academic Program Assessment** |

The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) conducts annual assessments at the program-level, including certificates and minors, to document support of ***SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation Section 8: Student Achievement***.

Student learning and student success are at the core of the mission of all institutions of higher learning. Effective institutions focus on the design and improvement of educational experiences to enhance student learning and support student learning outcomes for its education programs.

**Standard 8.2**:

The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvements based on analysis of the results in the areas below:

**Standard 8.2 a**:

For each of its educational programs.

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| **Important Updates** |

* The **due date** for all 2023-2024 assessment reports is **September 1, 2024**. All data and supplemental documentation must be entered into Weave by this date. Additionally, the status of the report must be set as “Complete” on Weave.

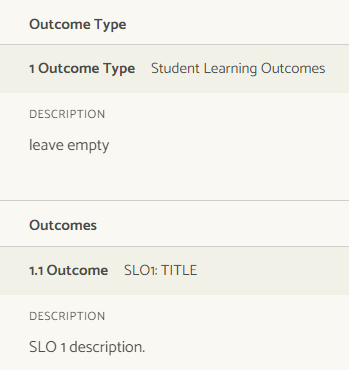
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| Certificate and Minor Assessment Plan and Report Guidelines |
| **Assessment Plan Guidelines** |

1. All USM certificates and stand-alone minors on the IHL Academic Program Inventory assess student-learning.
2. Certificate and minor assessment plans must have a minimum of two (2) Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).
3. Each SLO must have one (1) direct measure and one (1) target.
4. Overall course grades are **NOT** acceptable measures, direct or indirect.

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| **Report Guidelines** |

Certificates and stand-alone minors must be assessed annually. The following components are required for a complete certificate or minor assessment report:

1. **Program Description**: A brief description of the certificate/minor. How will this certificate/minor benefit students? What will students be able to do because of this certificate/minor. Please include the number ofhours required for the minor, delivery location (Hattiesburg, Gulf Park), and mode of delivery (face-to-face, online).
2. **Student Learning Outcomes**: *All certificates and minors must identify a minimum of two (2) SLOs, and each SLO must be assessed by at least one (1) direct measure.* 
   1. SLOs should answer: “When students complete this program, they will be able to…”
   2. Please include all Student Learning Outcomes under the first “Outcome Type” box titled “Student Learning Outcomes.” In this way, all SLOs will be under “1 Outcome Type.” An example is shown below:



1. **Measures and Targets**: A measure identifies evidence and methods used to determine achievement of expected outcomes. Measures should be detailed and specific. Targets are the quantitative criteria for how success will be measured. Measures can be direct (i.e., directly measure/evaluate a student’s work – exams, papers, portfolios, projects, etc.), or they can be indirect (i.e., methods that reflect on students’ learning – interviews, surveys, etc.). Each SLO must be assessed using at least one (1) direct measure. Measures and targets should show progressive distinction between degree levels, if applicable.
   1. Targets should be aspirational; it is not a requirement to meet the target. The goal of assessment is to continuously improve the certificate/minor and student learning. The target name should be left blank.
2. **Findings**: Findings are the results of the program’s measures. *Findings must be reported separately by site/mode of delivery and include all sites and/or modes.* Sample size must be included. If sampling is used, a detailed description of the sampling method must be included. All semesters must be included (Fall, Spring, and if applicable, Summer and intersession). Findings should explicitly state what semesters the data is from. After the findings have been entered, change the Target status to “met” or “not met.”
3. **Analysis of Findings**: The results are analyzed to determine whether or not student learning has been achieved and provide direction for continuous improvement. If a target is “not met,” what can be done to improve student learning? Have actions already been taken to improve student learning? For targets which are “met,” what action plans were implemented that led to this result? What best practices are in place? What challenges remain or have been overcome? Do new targets or measures need to be chosen now that the target has been met? Remember, the goal of assessment is continuous improvement.
   1. Stating that the target was “met” and no further action is to be taken is not an acceptable analysis.
4. **Action Plans**: A new action plan is required at least every other year and if a target is not met. Action plans must be entered into Weave for targets that were “not met” or “partially met.” Action plans may be specific to individual student learning outcomes or program-level action plans. An action plan is an organized activity undertaken to help programs more effectively achieve intended outcomes, or an activity developed by faculty to improve the program for the future. The results of action plans should provide evidence of continuous improvement activities and improve student learning. Action plans do not contain vague phrases such as “we will look into this” or “no action required.” If an action plan has been completed and the loop has been closed on a previous report, it no longer needs to be included in the assessment reports.
   1. Please ignore the “budge source” prompt; unfortunately, it cannot be removed from the Weave platform. Action plans that are not specific to an outcome (program-level action plans) should be entered into the analysis document.
   2. If an Action Plan was completed in the previous year and discussed in the closing the loop narrative section, it should be deleted from this year’s report. To delete the action plan, select the three dots and delete the section.
   3. Set SMART action plans: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound.
5. **Analysis Document**: All sections of the *Annual Program and Action Plan Analysis* document must be completed, and the document must be uploaded as a project attachment in Weave.

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| Detailed Analysis and Program Impact Reporting |

A separate Word document, *Annual Program and Action Plan Analysis,* will be provided to you. Additional details are included below. **All sections of the Word document must be completed and attached to your project in WEAVE for your project to be considered complete**.

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| **Action Plans and Closing the Loop Narrative** |

*Action Plans found in the Weave report* should also be listed in the analysis document. While this may seem repetitive, it is helpful for outside reviewers to view all action plans in one place. Provide any updates to “in-progress” or “ongoing” action plans that are found in Weave. What actions from this plan have already been implemented? Have any changes/improvements been noticed, thus far? What will be done next; what are the next steps in the plan?

Any *additional action plans related to SLOs/program curriculum* should also be listed. These are action plans that are not listed in the Weave report but are new or ongoing action plans. Provide any updates to “in-progress” or “ongoing” action plans. What actions from this plan have already been implemented? Have any changes/improvements been noticed, thus far? What will be done next; what are the next steps in the plan?

*Action plans completed in this cycle* (AY 2023-2024) should be briefly mentioned. In the *Closing the Loop Narrative*, a summary of the results of the completed action plans should be provided. The main goal of this section is to provide evidence of improvement based on the analysis of the results of the action plans. Previously, the certificate/minor's findings were analyzed, and that information was used to inform action (action plans) for improvement. Now, it is important to know: was our action plan successful? If not, what new efforts (new action plans) should we implement? To evaluate if an action plan was successful, compare the new assessment report results to the initial results (before action plan).

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| **Program Analysis** |

The *Program Analysis* should provide an overview of the program’s strengths and weaknesses that were observed during the year. Additionally, do students struggle with certain types of SLOs? Do students do well with certain SLOs? Will any program-wide changes be implemented in the next year to improve student learning?

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| **Program Review** |

In addition to providing the enrollment and graduation (completion) numbers, found on the IR website, please provide an analysis of the data. Consider the following questions:

* What is the ideal cohort size for the certificate/minor? How many students be supported with current resources and course offerings/capacities?
* How do current enrollment rates compare to this ideal certificate/minor cohort size?
* If current enrollment is below the ideal number, what efforts will be made to meet this ideal cohort size?

Additionally, provide any action plans related to enrollment and graduation/completion that your program will implement during the 2023-2024 academic year and updates to any action plans implemented or completed prior to 2023-2024. These action plans should focus on impactful methods to strengthen annual enrollment and graduation rates. Utilize graduation and enrollment data included in the IR data tables and from the *HelioCampus Program Review Snapshot* sent to Program Coordinators in January 2024.

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| Resources |

If you have any questions regarding the assessment plan and guidelines or Weave, please contact Claire Blackwell (Claire.Blackwell@usm.edu), the Institutional Assessment Coordinator. Additionally, [the Office of Institutional Effectiveness website](https://www.usm.edu/institutional-effectiveness/index.php) contains resources regarding program assessment, navigating weave, and SACSCOC requirements.

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| **Best Practices / Tips** |

* Enter data into Weave after each semester; do not wait until close to the due date to enter all data.
* Discuss the assessment report with other members of your school. Let faculty know the results of the report and the identified areas for improvement.
* Have a variety of measures. Use multiple assignments instead of one or two to measure all SLOs.
* See the previous certificate/minor’s review for feedback on specific areas for improving the report.
* Review the examples of strong assessment components found in the Resources section of the [Academic Assessment page](https://www.usm.edu/institutional-effectiveness/academicassessment.php) of the IE website.
* To ensure Weave information is not lost, have all data/Weave information saved as a Word document (prior to entering it into Weave) and ensure there is a strong connection to the internet when working in Weave.

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| **Reviewing and Submitting the Report** |

* Proof-read the report; check for grammatical errors, spelling errors, and typos. Remove any “empty/blank” sections that are not used.
* Use the compliance rubric to ensure all parts of the report are complete.
* Determine if the report supports SACSCOC Standard 8.2.a:
  + Does the report provide evidence of…
    - Identifying Student Learning Outcomes
    - Assessing the achievement of Student Learning Outcomes
    - Seeking improvement based on analysis of the results
* Have the school director and/or dean review the report, if applicable.
* Change the status of the project to “Complete” in Weave.
* Celebrate!

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| ***Thank you for your efforts and commitment to continuous improvement!*** |