

Assessment Matters

Unfortunately, I need to start off with a reminder that some Form Bs are now overdue. If you have not e-mailed me your form, please do so ASAP. This is particularly important for those assessing a course for the fall semester since the semester will soon be over! I review the assessment plans as they are submitted to ensure that the forms are being completed correctly. The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) will be visiting us again within the next few years, so it is important to demonstrate that we are meeting our assessment guidelines as set out in the Assessment Plan/Handbook created by Carol Helland. I strongly encourage staff and faculty to review the handbook, which is available on the MRCTC website and on the Mesabi "Q" Drive.

In most cases, the Form Bs have been well done. Some forms, however, have been missing the criterion for success. If you submit a Form B that is missing the latter step, I will contact you and ask you to amend the form. I have already done so in a few cases, and I would like to urge people to return their revised forms in a timely fashion. Thank you!

I have had quite a few questions about completing the Form Bs, so I thought it might be helpful to review the Form B process. I have excerpted information from the Assessment Plan/Handbook (pages 13-22 and 47-51). First, I will deal with program or course assessment. Each department/program chooses at least two courses to assess during the academic year. To create the Form B, the assessment contact person (or the department) chooses outcomes (usually two) to be assessed from the course outline. The person or department must then state the means of assessment and the criterion for success for each outcome. For example, a quantitative means of assessment, such as a test (or survey), may be used as the assessment tool. Faculty members must then decide how to determine whether or not the outcome has been met. Some choose to designate a percentage. For example, they might state that 80% of their students need to achieve a "B" or better on a test as the criterion for success. The results from that assessment will later be entered on the Form C and then analyzed on the Form D. Some faculty members may choose to use qualitative means of assessment, such as portfolios, interviews, or oral examinations. Either way, a criterion for success must be established.

Assessment for College Services is similar; however, emphasis is on "service" orientation and seeking improvement in the process. According to the handbook, "College Services should identify phrases from the Mission Statement and Goals that affect most college services...The college service identifies intended outcomes for the service...For a service, the outcomes are more likely to state the results of a process, rather than student achievements" (47-8). Staff members in the service department should work together to outline essential outcomes for the service. Only two or three of those outcomes need to be assessed in one year. The handbook contains guidelines on page 48 for creating outcomes statements as well as examples of both qualitative and quantitative means of assessment (pages 50-51). As with program/department assessment, College Services' assessment must also identify the means of assessment

and the criterion for success. An example of the latter might be that 80% of respondents will respond “satisfied” or “very satisfied” on the survey completed at the time of service.

Even if outcomes are met, the department/program or college service may still choose to assess the same outcome the following year to see if improvement can be noted. Once outcomes are met successfully, however, new outcomes should be chosen the following year. That will serve as evidence to the HLC that we are embracing a “continuous improvement culture” here at Mesabi.

Hopefully this short summary of the assessment process has been helpful. For further information, please consult the Assessment Handbook or contact me directly.

Stacey Hewitt Orobona
Assessment Coordinator