



Guidelines for Documenting Institutional Effectiveness

Rationale:

USMMA is regionally accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) to award baccalaureate and masters degrees. To maintain its accreditation, USMMA must remain compliant with the fourteen (14) standards set forth by MSCHE. The standards include institutional and educational requirements.

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment states: **The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.** The effectiveness of an institution rests upon the contribution that each of the institution's programs and services makes toward achieving the goals of the institution as a whole. This standard on institutional assessment thus builds upon all other accreditation standards, each of which includes periodic assessment of effectiveness as one of its fundamental elements. This standard ties together those assessments into an integrated whole to answer the question, "As an institutional community, how well are we collectively doing what we say we are doing?" and, in particular, "How do we support student learning, a fundamental aspect of institutional effectiveness?" Because student learning is a fundamental component of the mission of most institutions of higher education, the assessment of student learning is an essential component of the assessment of institutional effectiveness. (MSCHE, Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education).

In order to facilitate compliance with Standard 7, USMMA has implemented an in institution wide assessment management system in 2013 called WEAVEonline. It encourages USMMA faculty and staff to document institutional effectiveness and continuous quality improvement in key areas across the institution.

General Requirements:

1. Academic programs will identify student learning outcomes at the program (department) level, evaluate the extent to which these outcomes are achieved, and document evidence of improvement based on the corresponding analyses. Be mindful that the outcomes should be clearly aligned with institutional mission statement and strategic plan.
2. Academic support and Non-academic Programs shall identify outcomes/objectives as applicable; evaluate the extent to which these outcomes are achieved, and document evidence of improvement based on the corresponding analyses. Be mindful that the outcomes should be clearly aligned with institutional mission statement and strategic plan.

Process:

1. Each Program will complete an annual assessment plan and document it in WEAVEonline.
2. The assessment plan will become a part of Annual Program Review (and which programs will undergo this review at what time will be determined by the IEC). Extension requests will be reviewed on case by case basis.



As of: May 3, 2013

USMMA Office of Institutional Assessment: Assessment Plan Reviews

Background:

USMMA is in the process of implementing an institution-wide assessment process. Known as *WEAVEonline*, the idea stems from the fact that if faculty and staff utilized the system to document their effectiveness, it would result in a continuous quality improvement in all key areas across the institution. WEAVE is a key component in assisting USMMA to remain compliant with Middle States Commission on Higher Education accreditation requirements – especially Standard 7.

The realistic expectation is that the full implementation of *WEAVEonline* will take at least a year, upon which, the focus of Office of Institutional Assessment (OIA) will focus more on the quality of information being stored in WEAVE.

Process:

OIA has developed two rubrics for an evaluation of assessment plans. The Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee (AOAC) proposed that the Academic Program plans should be reviewed every five years beginning in July 2012 (CY 2012). Additionally, OIA proposes that the Administrative (Non-Academic and Academic Support) Programs be similarly reviewed on the same basis, but starting in the latter part of CY 2012.

Assessment plans in WEAVE will be officially reviewed by OIP w/assistance of AOAC. Reviews will focus on best assessment practices and are not intended to replace the Program Review Process that is critical toward achieving accreditation in 2016. Results will be appropriately communicated to each of the programs.

Reviewers:

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MISSION/PURPOSE:

- Brief statement (2-3 sentences) that communicates the overall purpose of your program/department, distinguishes it from similar areas, and clearly aligns with USMMA Mission

Example 1:

The Humanities Department, through directed reading, writing and discussion, develops midshipmen's knowledge of history and literature, oral and written communication skills, capacity to think critically, and awareness of American and world culture. The Department cultivates graduates who are intellectually engaged with, knowledgeable about, and respectful of the diversity of ideas and values that shape both the nation they serve and the world at large.

Example 1:

The Office of Institutional Assessment (OIA) supports achievement of USMMA Mission by promoting institutional effectiveness thru ongoing, systematic planning and assessment efforts.

GOALS:

- The term "goals" is used interchangeably with "outcomes" and "objectives," making this section in WEAVEonline obsolete.

OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES:

- OIA suggests that you have between 3-5 outcomes objectives. Fewer indicated that your objectives are likely too broad. Too many may suggest that that your objectives are too specific.
- Avoid directionality (e.g. increase/decrease) in wording your objectives. Avoid a specifically quantifiable target. Those can be used for achievement targets in WEAVE.
- Each objective/outcome needs to be linked to appropriate elements of USMMA institutional learning goals.

Student Learning Outcomes: Academic Programs will need to have Student Learning Outcomes – in other words – what will students be able to do upon Program completion?

Example:

Needs improvement: Students will learn effective communication skills. (How do you know they have learned these skills?)

Better: Students will be able to demonstrate effective communication skills when interacting with internal and external stakeholders.

Customer Outcomes: For educational support, administrative, and community outreach units, outcomes/objectives can become more confusing.



WEAVEOnline Assessment Tab Cheat Sheet

Example:

Needs improvement: Department of Information Technology will offer quarterly training on effective use of technology to improve classroom instruction.

Better: Faculty will be able to effectively utilize classroom technology to enhance student learning experiences. (Faculty is the customer here – thus, even though you may offer training, what matters is the desired result)

Process Objectives: Other Programs lend themselves more readily to process objectives, or anticipated actions which will move them toward accomplishment of the mission

Example:

Needs improvement: The Office of Admission will represent the USMMA at two recruitment events per trimester within the local community.

Better: The Office of Admissions will maintain a professional and visible presence at recruitment events in the local community. (You want to have the objectives be appropriate for several years so you don't have to change them frequently. Your achievement targets may change more frequently.)

MEASURES & FINDINGS:

Measures:

- What evidence will you have to document the progress you've made toward achieving your outcome/objective? (e.g. rubrics, surveys, compliance reports, certification exams...)
- Process indicators are good – number of workshops offered, number of people trained, webinars, etc.. such activities are documented by sign-in sheets or consultation logs.
- It is recommended that you have at least one measure per objective/outcome. You can have multiple measures per objective/outcome or ONE measure aligned with multiple objectives/outcomes.

Example:

U.S. Coast Guard- license awarded to merchant marine officers is in compliance with the requirements set forth in the International Convention on the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) 1978, as well as the STCW Code in subsequent related amendments.

Achievement Targets:

- For each measure you need to establish an achievement target. In other words, how will you know if you have been successful?
- These targets may offer directionality (increase/decrease) or specify something quantifiable (percent, rating, score). Sometimes, just stating an anticipated date of completion if no other target seem appropriate.
- Targets should change to indicate improvement over time.

Example:

90% 1st attempt pass-rate in USCG licensure exam.



WEAVEOnline Assessment Tab Cheat Sheet

Findings:

- What were these year's results?? Simply state the facts – no need to do an analysis of why you did / did not meet a certain target as there will be an opportunity for you to do that later.

Example:

Needs improvement: The target enrollment for Class of 2015 has been met.

Better: The official enrollment figure for Class of 2015 was XX. Additional demographic data can be found in Class of 2015 report.

ACTION PLAN TRACKING:(Optional)

ACHIEVEMENT SUMMARY/ANALYSIS:

- This is a **very important** portion of WEAVEonline Plan. It is one thing to establish your outcomes/objectives and measure progress, but it is how you use those results to promote improvement that really matters!!!!
- Responses to three (3) questions will be required:

- (1) Review Achievement Targets for <PREVIOUS CYCLE> that were marked as Partially Met or Not Met. Describe in detail what actions you took in <CURRENT CYCLE> to address those issues. Then summarize impact of those actions on this year's findings. Upload any supporting documents. If all of the Targets are marked as Met, type Not applicable.
NOTE: If this is your initial year of measuring your targets, please make sure you note that in your comment. If you have measured your Targets in previous cycles, but not used WEAVE, make sure you answer the question appropriately – as if you had them in your <PREVIOUS CYCLE>.
- (2) Review Achievement Targets for <CURRENT CYCLE> that were marked as Partially Met or Not Met. Describe in detail what actions you plan on taking over the next year to address them appropriately. If you marked them all as Met, what do you intend to do in the <FUTURE CYCLE> to promote continuous improvement in your area?
- (3) Provide a summary of your Program/Department activities in the <CURRENT CYCLE>. You can use your annual Program Review to describe major accomplishments. Upload supporting documentation.

ANNUAL/SPECIAL REPORTING: (optional)



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DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT:

- Upload any key documents that provide evidence of the progress you made in achieving your outcomes/objectives.
- Never upload documents containing identifying information.
- Use format that most people have access to – Word, Excel, PowerPoint, PDF).

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