

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

University Assessment Steering Committee

*Purpose, Activities, and Guidelines
2020 through 2025*

Revised September 24, 2025
Previously Revised February 21, 2011
Originally Approved as “Assessment Plan and Timetable,” February 19, 2003

Introduction

The University Assessment Steering Committee (UASC) was established in 2001 to develop and recommend assessment policy and plans for the institution. The Assessment Plan and Timetable, which was approved in 2002-03, included the committee charge and also served to guide academic departments in the creation of assessment plans and establishment of committee structures in support of on-going assessment activities at that time. As the University's assessment culture has evolved, the UASC has broadened its focus to include assessment of learner support units across campus in order to more clearly reflect the needs of the University and its stakeholders.

Purpose

The purpose of the University Assessment Steering Committee is to collaborate with campus stakeholders to develop and support a culture of assessment for continuous improvement with an emphasis on student learning outcomes. A periodic and university-wide assessment of programs, lead and supported by UASC, can help to improve the educational experience and supports WMU's departments with accreditation institutions/bodies where appropriate. Recognizing that learning happens in the curricular and co-curricular environments, the UASC guides assessment programs for both academic units and learner support units to help improve the overall learning experience of WMU students. The UASC aids faculty, department chairs, college administrators, and staff in developing useful and precise tools of assessment in their classes, programs, and colleges. Acknowledging that some fields already are subject to external accreditation, the UASC seeks to align assessment, accreditation, and program review processes.

Definitions

The definitions of several terms associated with assessment are provided in order to clarify and differentiate assessment from other university activities such as program planning, strategic planning, self-study or evaluation.

Assessment

"Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning" (Huba & Freed, 2000, p. 8).

The University Assessment Steering Committee's work is focused on the assessment of student learning and development. Other assessment activities, for example activities related to professional accreditation and program evaluation, are valued at WMU and the UASC supports the elements of accreditation and evaluation related to the assessment of student learning and development.

Academic program planning

This is a comprehensive review of academic programs that should align effective assessment with campus-wide continuous improvement, and provide meaningful data-driven information to assist with strategic planning. The academic and learner support unit program review process should provide direction in planning for creating, sustaining, growing, merging, or eliminating academic and co-curricular programs in order to maintain program relevancy for both students and the community. Assessment of student learning is involved, but only plays a small role in academic program planning.

Assessment plan

Assessment plans identify the structure, timeline and uses of assessment within the unit. Plans should include the following:

- Clear statements of intended student learning outcomes with criteria for student performance
- Multiple measures to determine the extent to which students are meeting those intended outcomes
- Timeline for collecting data on student performance measures
- Planned uses of assessment results for program improvement

Plans are dynamic documents that change to reflect lessons learned from assessment results as well as advances in the discipline. Plans should be continuously reviewed and formally updated at least every five years.

Goals

The goals of UASC are to help members of the Western Michigan University community to:

Recognize the work and successes of faculty and staff in conducting and promoting assessment activities and quality efforts of continuous improvement.

Inform and educate the University community about assessment activities, resources, and opportunities to increase the awareness and value of the processes and benefits of doing assessment for continuous improvement. Including evaluating the campus culture of assessment and data-informed decision making on a regular basis.

Support the University community to develop and implement assessment efforts. The UASC reviews and provides feedback on assessment plans, learning activities, and use of the results in completing the assessment process to promote the development and continuous improvement of assessment planning activities across the institution.

Engage the campus community through professional development and learning opportunities such as the annual assessment conference, the Assessment Toolkit, webinars and trainings.

Activities

The UASC engages in activities to support, evaluate, and enhance the culture of assessment at WMU. The activities are intended to provide opportunities and support for faculty, staff, and students to engage in research about assessment, to learn and apply assessment techniques, and to recognize and celebrate those who excel in assessment. The UASC is involved with and coordinates the following activities.

Recognize

- *Individual Assessment Excellence Award* – Awarded for research in student learning and work in assessment for program improvement (last 2021)
- *Collaboration Assessment Excellence Award* – Awarded for an outstanding assessment process actively using results for program improvement involving colleagues across multiple, different departments, programs, and/or units (last 2021)
- *Unit Assessment Excellence Award* – Awarded for an outstanding assessment process actively using results for program improvement (last 2021)
- *Assessment Mini Grants* - Awarded to advance the formal assessment of student learning outcomes and program quality
- *Examples of Practice Recognition* - Use the Culture of Assessment Report data to recognize programs or efforts that were evaluated and established as excellent examples of practice

Inform

- Regularly share resources and training opportunities from across the profession
- Provide support to units regarding assessment plans, processes, reporting and results
- Provide guidance and training related to assessment tools, including technological tools
- Works in collaboration with the Director of Western Essential Studies in order to share updates and assessment results with the campus community
- Assessment news and best practices shared as a part of the Institutional Effectiveness newsletter
- Website with assessment information and resources
- Share (e.g. through list serv, email, website) assessment-related results with the campus community (e.g. Metric Monday)

Support

- Serve as a consultation and review team to provide feedback and guidance on proposed assessment plans, assessment process, reports, and making data-informed decisions
- Assessment Toolkit
- Provide resources (e.g. worksheets, the Toolkit, and workshops) related to assessment practice

Engage

- Engage the campus community in a regular review of the culture of assessment through the submissions of program assessments, evaluation of these assessments using a rubric, and providing feedback to the programs, chairs, departments, colleges, and VPs
- Offer Assessment Mini Grant presentations by grant recipients
- UASC Annual Activity Summary
- Annual assessment conference/professional development series with keynote speaker and breakout workshops
- Engage the campus community with discussions about making meaning (and action) out of institutional data sets (e.g. Project CEO, NCHA, NSSE)

Structure and Membership

The UASC is an independent committee that reports to the provost. The membership structure of the UASC was approved on February 16, 2015, at the UASC's monthly meeting. UASC is comprised of 4 permanent members: program manager assessment from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, the director, assessment, marketing, and communications, Division of Student Affairs, Western Essential Studies, and Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Rotating committee membership represents areas of the campus charged with student learning and development. Members are drawn from the academic colleges, learner support units, other university committees, students and administrators. Units represented will be assessed on an on-going basis to be representative of the activities, goals and future direction of UASC. The rotating members represent the seven academic colleges, academic advising, Division of Student Affairs, Graduate College, Haenicke Institute for Global Education, Lee Honors College, Merze Tate College, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Office of Institutional Effectiveness, University Libraries, Undergraduate Studies Council, and WMUx. Rotating members serve staggered, three-year terms. New members are recruited as needed, through a process developed by the committee of the whole.

Other units on campus, e.g., Western Student Association (WSA), Graduate Students Association (GSA), will be advised of the work of UASC through the distribution of agendas if requested. WSA and GSA are welcome to send representatives to monthly meetings of the committee.

Comprised of representatives across the campus, the UASC works closely with and receives fiscal and operational support from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

The UASC meetings are presided over by the committee chair. At the last meeting of the academic year, a vice-chair is elected from the rotating membership. If the current committee chair represents academic affairs, the vice-chair must represent learner support units, and vice versa. After serving one year as vice chair, the vice chair becomes chair of the committee. This transition occurs for any meetings that fall after the last one of the academic year, normally in May. Both positions are expected to participate in setting the agenda for each meeting. In the event of the UASC chair needing to resign or vacate their position, the vice chair becomes chair and a new vice chair is selected from among the rotating members. The past chair continues to

support the chair and vice chair through participation in monthly agenda setting meetings and attendance at regular monthly meetings.

Executive planning committee description and function

The executive committee consists of the 4 permanent members, (program manager assessment from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, the director, assessment, marketing and communications, Student Affairs, the director, WMU Essential Studies, member from the Office of Diversity and Inclusion), as well as the UASC chair, UASC vice chair and UASC past chair (potentially 7 members total). The executive committee meets monthly, (normally 1 to 2 weeks prior to each regular monthly UASC meeting), to propose direction and scope of work for the entire committee and set monthly meeting agendas. The past chair is expected to attend monthly agenda setting meetings, and regular monthly committee meetings, in order to provide a continuance of leadership and to provide guidance and assistance to the chair and vice chair as they transition to their new roles and throughout the year after chairing the committee.

Description of the collaborative relationship of the UASC and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness

The UASC and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness work hand-in-hand to support assessment efforts across the University community. Specific contributions from the Office of the Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) include: fiscal and operational support to the UASC, including secretarial support to the committee and leadership of assessment professional development activities; oversight of the administration of institution-wide surveys (National Survey of Student Engagement, Faculty Survey of Student Engagement); liaison between Higher Learning Commission requirements for assessment and the UASC; liaison on matters related to assessment and accreditation; shared leadership with the chair, vice chair, past chair and executive committee of the UASC.

Specific contributions from the UASC include: serves as the university-wide assessment policy, planning and resource coordination group; advises the provost and senior administrators about assessment policy, resources, and findings from assessment reports; determines an annual calendar of institutional assessment support and educational activities; assists the director of WMU Essential Studies with assessment activities as requested; informally reviews and provides assistance in the review of department and unit assessment plans as requested, and examines assessment findings; reviews and approves assessment grants; reviews and provides feedback on assessment reports. Both UASC and OIE will provide liaisons as needed to promote assessment activities and support a culture of assessment at Western Michigan University.

Expectations of service from chair, vice chair and past chair

It is expected that the chair, vice chair and past chair will participate in the monthly agenda setting meetings and regular monthly committee meetings. Attendance and participation in these meetings will help the vice chair to learn the functions of the executive committee, allow them to help to shape the work of the larger committee as a whole and prepare them for taking over as the chair at the appointed time. It is also expected that the vice chair will actively be involved in monthly

meetings, assisting the chair in moving the agenda forward through leadership and collaboration with chair and past chair.

Monthly meetings will be run by the chair using Robert's Rules of Order with assistance and input provided by executive committee members when requested.

The chair will prepare an annual report at the end of the academic year, sharing updates and accomplishments from the past year. The report should be approved by UASC members by vote at the first meeting of the new academic year (or August retreat), and shared electronically, (copying the executive committee members, the provost, the senior vice provost for academic affairs, budget and operations, the vice president for diversity and inclusion, the vice president for student affairs), no later than September 30.

Expectations of service from UASC members

Members of the UASC are expected to participate in the activities of the committee to ensure that the functions and responsibilities can be executed. It is expected that members will attend monthly meetings, serve on at least one subcommittee/working group, and promote and support assessment outreach activities through attendance of various UASC sponsored workshops, conferences, and special events.

Subcommittees

The UASC convenes a number of subcommittees to conduct the work of the committee. Following is a list of the main subcommittees normally assembled for this purpose. Other ad hoc committees will be organized as the need arises.

Campus Support Committee

- Use data from the last round of the Culture of Assessment reports to identify units across the institution with needs and/or requests for assistance
- Assessment report (distribute reports to subcommittees, update templates and rubrics, recommend timelines, administrative support for reporting process and assist with writing feedback report(s) and providing recommendations)

Information and Communication

- Develop opportunities to spread the word to the university community about data including NSSE, FSSE, and other surveys and data sources
- Use data from the last round of Culture of Assessment reports to identify what resources could be the most useful/most needed, cultivate, and share resources

Assessment Awards and Recognition

- Assessment Awards (review and selection of Assessment Excellence Collaboration, Individual and Unit Awards and Assessment Mini Grants)
- Use Culture of Assessment reports to recognize programs of excellence

Engagement and Measures of Success Series

- Measures of Success Professional Development Series (assist with various planning activities)
- Engage campus to better utilize assessment data we have available and spread the word to the university community about this data including the NSSE, FSSE, and other surveys and data sources
- Facilitate regular (every other year) review of the culture of assessment across WMU

University Assessment Steering Committee Review

The UASC shall review its purpose, activities and guidelines at least every five years to insure effectiveness and relevance of the committee. The next review shall occur no later than 2026.

UASC Projected Timeline of Activities

September	<p>Monthly meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -On-boarding of new members prior to meeting -Annual Activity Report vote for approval; sent to provost, the senior vice provost for academic affairs, budget and operations, vice president for diversity and inclusion, and vice president for Student Affairs, no later than September 30 annually -Call for Mini Grant proposals goes out (due at the end of September)
October	Monthly meeting
November	<p>Monthly meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mini grants awarded and announcements made to university community about awardees
December	<p>Monthly meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Call for nominations for Assessment Excellence Awards goes out (due in January)
January	<p>Monthly meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Collaboration, Individual, and Unit Assessment Excellence Award nominations due
February	<p>Monthly meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Assessment Excellence Awards selection -Annual assessment conference/professional development series, held now or in March (Excellence awards presented)
March	<p>Monthly meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Annual assessment conference/professional development series, held now or in March (Excellence awards presented)
April	<p>Monthly meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Call for nominations for vice chair
May	<p>Monthly meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Select UASC vice chair -UASC Annual Activity Report – draft created after May meeting, sent to members for review
August retreat	-Set goals and priorities for the year (review current strategic plan)

References

Huba, M.E. & J.E. Freed (2000). *Learner-centered assessment on college campuses*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon

Appendix – UASC Membership Structure Terms

University Assessment Steering Committee
Revised Membership Structure
August 11, 2025

Currently, there are 17 representatives to the University Assessment Steering Committee (UASC) and 4 permanent members, for a total of 21 members. Prior to 2014, there had been one officer of the UASC, the committee chair. In September 2014, the UASC approved a leadership change of the UASC, adding a vice-chair who will assume the role of chair after one year. This was done to create a seamless transition in leadership each year. The UASC also determined that the chair and vice-chair should always represent both the academic and student support sides of Western. In December 2014, it was recommended that term lengths be changed from 2 years to 3 years, so as to allow greater leadership development for the two officers: chair and vice chair. In discussion in January 2015, it was suggested that terms on the UASC be staggered to allow for greater continuity on the committee. Based on those actions, discussions and additional deliberation, the UASC Executive Committee recommends the following changes to membership structure for UASC, effective spring 2015.

Note: The terms are for the current year 2025-28. In the fall 2025 the rotating term schedule will be updated to persons currently serving in those positions.

Rotating Members		
Unit	New Term	Comments
Academic Advising	2023-26	
College of Arts and Sciences (2)	2023-26	
	2025-28	
College of Aviation	2023-26	
Haworth College of Business	2025-28	
College of Education and Human Development	2024-27	
College of Engineering and Applied Sciences	2024-27	
College of Fine Arts	2024-27	
College of Health and Human Services	2023-26	
Division of Student Affairs (at large rep.)	2023-26	
Graduate College	2025-28	
Haenicke Institute for Global Education	2025-28 Vacant	
Lee Honors College	2024-27	
Merze Tate College	2025-28	
Office of Diversity and Inclusion	2025-28	
Teaching & Learning	2025-28	
Undergraduate Studies Council	2024-27	
University Libraries	2024-27	
Permanent Members		
Program Manager Assessment, Institutional Effectiveness	-----	
Director Assessment, Marketing and Communications, Student Affairs	-----	
WMU Essential Studies	2025-28 Vacant	
Office of Diversity and Inclusion	-----	

Rotating Term Schedule

	Academic Units	Student/Staff Support Units
2023-26	CAS CoA CHHS	Academic Advising DOSA (at-large rep)
2024-27	CEAS CEHD CFA Lee Honors College Undergraduate Studies Council	University Libraries
2025-28	CAS Graduate College HCOB HIGE – VACANT WMU Essential Studies - VACANT	Teaching & Learning Office of Diversity and Inclusion Merze Tate College