

**Student Learning Outcome Assessment at Central Washington University
2014-2015 Executive Summary**

As prepared by:

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Assessment of student learning is an essential function of Central Washington University’s efforts to evaluate student knowledge, skills, and dispositions as well as overall academic and institutional effectiveness. Central Washington University offered 99 undergraduate and 34 graduate degree programs during the 2014-2015 academic year in four colleges (Arts & Humanities, Business, Education and Professional Studies, and Sciences). All of the 133 degree programs were expected to provide annual documentation of programmatic student learning outcomes achievement. Eighty six percent (114 out of 133) of academic programs submitted a report or revised plan for 2014-2015 with a total of 8,432 student assessments.

Table 1. CWU Programs Submitting Annual Assessment of Student Learning Reports

	# UG programs	% UG with reports	# Grad programs	% Grad with reports	Total Number of Programs	% Programs with SLO Reports
2014/15	99	87%	34	82%	133	86%
2013/14	98	100%	35	100%	133	100%
2012/13	92	100%	33	100%	125	100%
2011/12	87	100%	32	100%	119	100%
2010/11	87	100%	32	100%	119	100%
2009/10	87	93%	30	83%	117	91%
2008/09	88	91%	30	73%	118	86%
2007/08	87	84%	28	46%	115	75%

The following summary is intended to provide an aggregated qualitative analysis of individual program reports and provide documentary evidence of college and university student learning outcome attainment for the 2014-2015 academic year. Programmatic assessment of student learning at Central Washington University is framed around five component questions:

1. Outcomes - are learning outcomes appropriate?
2. Methods - Are assessment methods effective?
3. Results - Is there evidence that students achieve stated learning outcomes?
4. Feedback/program Improvement - In what ways are student learning results used for programmatic improvement?
5. Previous Year Use - In what ways are student learning results used for programmatic improvement over time and is that information disseminated?

Table 2. A Summary of CWU-wide Average Component Ratings

	Outcomes	Methods	Results	Feedback/ Program Improv.	Previous Year Use
2014/15	3.0	2.9	3.7	1.8	1.7
2013/14	2.9	3.0	3.8	1.8	1.8
2012/13	3.1	2.9	3.7	1.8	1.6
2011/12	2.7	2.9	3.6	1.7	1.6
2010/11	2.5	2.7	3.2	1.7	1.6
2009/10	2.6	2.6	3.0	1.4	1.7
2008/09	2.8	2.4	3.1	1.1	1.5
2007/08	2.6	2.3	3.0	1.1	1.5
TARGET	3 / 4	3 / 4	3 / 4	2 / 2	2 / 2

Component 1: Student Learning Outcome Appropriateness

All academic programs have developed clear student learning outcomes that encompass all degree offerings and focus on development of student knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions (see <http://www.cwu.edu/associate-provost/student-learning-outcome-assessment-plans>). All student learning outcomes are aligned to outcomes in Central Washington University’s Strategic Plan. This alignment demonstrates program coherence and connection with and between university goals, curriculum, instruction, and assessment processes.

In examining the 133 assessment reports submitted and revised plans submitted in 2014-2015, 52 programs out of 79 programs with data (66%) linked all student learning outcomes with outcomes in CWU’s strategic plan or with departmental goals, college goals, and CWU’s Mission Statement.

Reports also indicated that student knowledge and skills were assessed much more frequently than dispositions/attitudes for the eighth year in a row. Specifically, 354 student learning outcomes were assessed across all university programs. 29 of the 354 outcomes (8%) were dispositions, 88% were either knowledge or skills.

These findings continue to demonstrate Central Washington University’s emphasis and varied approach to analyzing programmatic goals. They also indicate the need for more programs to assess dispositions since professional attitudes are likely to be important within most disciplines.

Component 2: Assessment Method Effectiveness

Effective methods of analysis should be related to learning outcomes and the activities that support those outcomes. Assessment methods should include *direct* (i.e., tests, essays, projects,

assignments, etc.) and *indirect* (surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.) approaches to provide as complete a picture as possible as to whether students are developing targeted knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Methods should also have clear standards of mastery against which results are compared to provide assurance of student outcome attainment.

Examination of the assessment reports submitted during the 2014-2015 academic year showed that all programs who submitted data used some form of direct or indirect method for programmatic outcome measurement (some programs did not submit details, e.g., because goals were being revised). Direct methods were used more frequently and proportionately more often than indirect methods.

- 88% of degree programs used direct assessment methods
- 8% of degree programs used indirect methods
- 4% of degree programs used both direct and indirect assessment methods

Sixty-six of the seventy nine programs with data (84%) had clear standards of mastery for all outcomes. Clear standards of mastery are important as it allows definitive analysis of outcome attainment.

Component 3: Evidence of Student Learning Outcome Achievement

Student learning and programmatic outcome attainment is an important element of institutional academic integrity and achievement. Of the 19 graduate assessment reports with data, 18 or 95% presented student learning results in specific quantitative or qualitative (measurable) terms. Of the 60 undergraduate program assessment reports that were submitted with data, 59 or 99% presented student learning results in specific quantitative or qualitative (measurable) terms.

In addition, 51 of 60 undergraduate programs with data (85%) and 15 of 19 (79%) of graduate programs with data submitted program reports that compared all outcome results to established standards of mastery. The overall percent was 84%. Specifically, 354 programmatic outcomes (85 graduate and 269 undergraduate) were assessed during the 2014/2015 academic year.

Two hundred fifty of the 354 programmatic outcomes (71%) were reported as students meeting and/or exceeding stated outcome mastery/criterion levels. This trend was stronger at the graduate level (76 of 85, 89%). At the undergraduate level, 174 of 269 learning goals (65%) were met. The results are significant as they provide an important element of assurance for institutional student learning and outcomes achievement. Many degree programs continue to develop higher standards for student learning outcomes as they are assessed and improved.

Component 4: Using Student Learning Evidence for Programmatic Improvement

“The important question is not how assessment is defined but whether assessment information is used...” (Palomba & Banta, 1999). The assessment system in place at CWU shows that learning evidence is analyzed and used to improve pedagogy and/or program curricula. Of the 79 assessment reports submitted with data for 2014-2015, 69 (87%) provided documentation of pedagogical and/or curricular changes planned as a result of their assessment findings. In addition, some programs submitting assessment reports (n=62, 79%) provided evidence that assessment results and findings from previous years were being used for long-term pedagogical and curricular decision-making.

Component 5: Student Learning Results Dissemination

Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility. Disseminating programmatic assessment results is important, particularly for increasing the transparency of how assessment processes are (and should be) used to continuously improve student learning, instruction, and ultimately programs. Whereas faculty play a key role in all aspects of the assessment process, questions of program and institutional effectiveness cannot be fully addressed without participation and collaboration with other internal (student-affairs, librarians, administrators, faculty, and students) and external (alumni, trustees, employers) audiences whose experience and potential input can enrich discussion and further broaden programmatic understanding and support. During the 2014-2015 academic year, 62 of 79 (79%) program reports with data provided evidence that assessment results and/or changes were reported to internal and/or external constituents.

Summary

The development of systematic and routine assessment processes by departments and programs is encouraging and improving at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The following conclusions can be drawn from CWU’s 2014-2015 degree program assessment report cycle:

1. Eighty six percent of the 133 academic programs submitted a student learning outcome assessment report for the 2014-2015 academic year. Seventy -nine of the reports (59%) actually contained data. The reports that did not have data were for degree programs that were revising assessment, that were on reserve, etc.
2. Bret Smith, [faculty Assessment Coordinator](#), worked with all degree programs to update their student learning outcomes and (a) tie them to outcomes in CWU’s Strategic Plan and (b) develop timelines for when they will be assessed. He is also working with Institutional Effectiveness to develop Canvas-based assessment techniques that can improve the scope, timeliness, and quality of student learning outcome assessment data.

3. Seventy-seven of seventy-nine academic programs with data used some form of direct or indirect methods for outcome measurement. Direct methods were used proportionately more often than indirect methods again. Eight-four percent of the 354 student learning outcomes that were assessed had clear standards of mastery. This allows for focused analysis of outcome attainment.
4. The majority of CWU academic programs collected quantitative data, reported on student learning outcome achievement, and compared outcome results to established standards of mastery.
5. Students again met and/or exceeded most (71%) of mastery/criterion levels this year for programmatic outcomes.
6. A majority of CWU academic programs with data (87%) documented pedagogical and/or curricular change as a result of assessment findings.
7. The 2014/15 rubric ratings were very similar to 2013/14:

	2014/15	2013/14
What student learning outcomes were assessed this year, and why?	3.0	2.9
How were outcomes assessed? What/Who/When	2.9	3.0
What was learned (assessment results)?	3.7	3.8
What will the department or program do as a result of that information (feedback/program improvement)?	1.8	1.8
5. How did the department or program make use of the feedback from last year's assessment? Were the changes effective?	1.7	1.8

8. There were 8.432 student assessments during 2014-2015. This was up significantly from the 4.054 student assessments during 2013-2014. This was despite the percent of programs with reports dropping a bit.

Suggestions for Continuous Improvement

The drop in the percent of programs submitting reports is worrisome. Part of the reason might be that several departments in the College of Education and Professional Studies were reorganizing while we asked degree programs to submit reports.

Some changes may be needed:

1. It would help if a team of faculty rated submissions from other colleges. The raters would be more likely to read other reports and ratings would be done sooner.
2. Quickly after program reports are analyzed with the rubric it would help if that department was contacted with summary results.
3. It would also help if the results on CWU's web page were displayed more prominently.
4. A web form might help department's complete annual reports quicker if they were prompted at each step.

As a result of this year's programmatic assessment reporting and feedback cycle, the following suggestions are made to improve the process and departmental performance for next year:

1. Continue to provide professional development to assist faculty in integrating best practice assessment processes. This should continue to bolster and improve direct assessment methods and include greater focus on indirect assessment of knowledge, skills, and student dispositions.
2. Continue to recognize and reward departments and programs that exhibit best practice assessment processes.
3. Continue to provide examples and means for programmatic assessment information dissemination through the academic assessment website.
4. CWU increased the target outcomes for objectives 1, 2, and 3 during 2013/14. CWU has consistently exceeded the prior target of 2.0 on a scale of 0 to 4 for those three objectives. The average ratings for element #3 "Results" has been at or above 3.0 for the seven years with data. That target should be increased again.

Table 3. 2014/15 CWU Program Assessment Reports Compared to 2013/14

	2014/15	2013/14
Degree program student learning outcomes assessed	354	248
Learning outcomes linked to outcomes in CWU Strat. Plan	247	166
Percent of Learning Outcomes linked to Strat. Plan Outcomes	68%	67%
Programs that linked all student learning outcomes Strat. Plan	66%	63%
How many student assessments?	8,432	4,054
How many assessments were direct?	98%	85%
How many assessment methods were indirect?	8%	15%
% of degree programs with both direct and indirect assessment	5%	4%
Student Learning Outcomes assessed	354	248
# of student learning outcomes with standards of mastery	214	238
# of student learning outcomes that met or exceeded Standards of Mastery	250	199
# of programs reporting results to internal/external constituents	71	68
Changes planned in pedagogy/curriculum based on assess.	69	63
Changes made based on prior year's assessment	62	64

Student Learning Outcomes that were assessed were linked to Strategic Plan Outcomes for the first time for 2014/15 Assessment Reports. 6,901 of the 8,432 student assessments were linked to specific outcomes in CWU's Strategic Plan. Table 4 estimates how many of the assessments were linked to specific outcomes in the Strategic Plan.

In the future we hope that fewer student learning outcomes that were assessed link to Strategic Plan outcome 1.1.1 and that more student learning outcomes that are assessed link to other outcomes in CWU's Strategic Plan.

Table 4. An Estimate of Which Strategic Plans were Linked to Student Learning Outcomes that Were Assessed in 2014/15

Strategic Plan Outcomes	Number of Assessments	Percent of 6,901
Outcome 1.1.1: Students will achieve programmatic learning outcomes.	4844	70%
Outcome 1.1.3: Students and faculty will be increasingly engaged in the learning process in and outside the classroom.	673	10%
Outcome 2.3.2: Increase the inclusion and integration of international cultural perspectives in the curriculum.	334	5%
Outcome 2.3.3: Increase the inclusion and integration of underrepresented group perspectives in the curriculum	165	2%
Outcome 3.1.1: Sustain participation by faculty, students, and staff in research, scholarship, and creative expression.	603	9%
Outcome 3.1.2: Sustain the number of courses that include research, scholarship, and creative expression skills as key outcomes.	282	4%

