



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

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September 11, 2018

Dr. Jeffrey Bauer, Dean
University of Cincinnati-Clermont College
4200 Clermont College Drive
Batavia, OH 45103

Dear Dean Bauer:

The interim report you submitted to our office has now been reviewed. The staff analysis of the report is attached.

On behalf of the Higher Learning Commission staff received the report on assessment and credit hours. No further reports are required.

The Open Pathway Assurance Review is scheduled for 2020. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2025– 2026.

For more information on the interim report process contact Lil Nakutis, Accreditation Processes Manager, at lnakutis@hlcommission.org. Your HLC staff liaison is Linnea Stenson (lstenson@hlcommission.org); (800) 621-7440 x 107.

Thank you.

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION



STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT

DATE: September 11, 2018

STAFF LIAISON: Linnea Stenson

REVIEWED BY: Steven Kapelke

INSTITUTION: University of Cincinnati-Clermont College, Batavia, OH

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Dr. Jeffrey Bauer, Dean

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION AND SOURCES: An interim report is required by 6/1/2018 on faculty and staff involvement in curricular/co-curricular assessment. General education core competencies and alignment of gen ed learning outcomes should be addressed as well as steps taken to ensure assessment results are included in planning and budgeting processes. The report should also document revised institutional policy for credit hours to address all the delivery formats employed by the institution and provide evidence of implementation. This should include a clear process by which learning outcomes across all modes of delivery are verified.

This interim report derives from the Team Report of the institution's 2016 Comprehensive Evaluation. The team noted the following:

"While UC - Clermont is participating in assessment activities at the course and programmatic level these activities are not mirrored in the co-curricular setting. It is also unclear as to what degree a true culture of assessment exists at the institution. The lack of understanding by faculty and staff of the general education aspect of assessment make it difficult to use assessment results to drive real changes in student success."

REPORT PRESENTATION AND QUALITY: The University of Cincinnati-Clermont interim report is presented in a competently written narrative supported by extensive documentation in the appendices. The appendices are contained in multiple sections corresponding to the organization of the report's narrative and include such items as the Phase I Co-Curricular Student Learning Outcomes Statements, the University of Cincinnati General Education Definition, and the Academic Assessment Committee Program Review Rubric, among a broad range of materials.

REPORT SUMMARY: Following a brief section that provides context for the report, the narrative is presented in five sections, each corresponding to one issue identified in the HLC Team Report of the institution's 2016 Comprehensive Evaluation. The following summary employs the section titles used by the institution in its report.

I. Faculty and staff involvement in curricular co-curricular assessment. In this section, the report describes its efforts in developing a system for assessing co-curricular learning and engaging faculty and staff members more effectively in assessment. Here the report notes the institution's participation in the HLC Assessment Academy (Fall 2017 cohort) and the administration of the staff aptitude survey, which included an introduction to co-curricular assessment.

According to the report, the Assessment Academy Team examined possible ideas for its assessment project, ultimately deciding on a concept that focused on the University of Cincinnati's five undergraduate core competencies: critical thinking; effective communication; information literacy; knowledge integration; and social responsibility. Ultimately the assessment project was divided—operationally--into two phases—the first for AY2017-2018, the second (Phase II) for AY2018-2019, with different co-curricular areas represented in each phase. For example, Accessibility Services, academic programs/disciplines, and Academic Advising are represented in Phase I-- Admissions and Recruiting in Phase II.

The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and the Assessment Academy Team was scheduled to present a progress report at the August 2018 faculty retreat and again at a staff gathering during the Fall 2018 semester. The institution will continue to hold meetings on a biannual basis with academic departments and co-curricular areas as a means by which to continue cultivating a learning assessment culture on campus.

II. Alignment of general education learning outcomes with general education core competencies including foundational skills and breadth of knowledge designations. Titled the Clermont Core, the institution's general education undergraduate core competencies are "*at the core of everything we do.*" The Clermont core concept, with "*I can*" prompts beginning the outcome statements for each competency is scheduled for presentation to the faculty in Fall 2018. Here the report provides examples of "type of statements that the college will use to connect the competencies to academic programs or general education course outcomes. One such example, as articulated in the report, is stated like this:

- *Critical Thinking: As an Information Technology student, I can demonstrate proficiency with contemporary computer applications, demonstrate fundamental knowledge underpinning information technology and demonstrate capabilities such as problem solving, critical thinking and troubleshooting.*

At this point, the report reiterates the fundamental importance of the Clermont Core to the education of all students at UC Clermont, in both general education and academic programs/majors. The report also provides a breakdown of the UC Clermont general education requirements, which fall into four categories: Key Touchpoints; Foundational Skills; Breadth of Knowledge; and Breadth of Knowledge Distribution Areas.

The report also provides further detail with regard to the general education requirements, noting, for example, that the institution's requirements meet or exceed the Ohio Department of Higher Education General Education Guidelines--and citing specific courses within degree programs to illustrate the point.

According to the report, the institution is in process of implementing the Campus Labs Outcomes platform for assessment; this involves meetings with appropriate faculty coordinators and co-curricular staff members for the purpose of reviewing and entering learning outcomes, measures and AY2016-2017 and AY2017-2018 assessment results into the platform. With regard to Campus Labs Outcomes, the report also provides more detail pertaining to the value of the platform in measuring "*aggregate achievement of the competencies*" at several different levels: Institution, Department and administrative unit, and Program, discipline and co-curricular programs/services. In particular, the document notes the value of the platform in enabling high-level analysis of assessment data and triggering useful discussions about how assessment results can lead to continuous improvement.

III. Linking assessment results to budgeting and planning.

Here the report provides an update on the "strategies to establish a budget-aware culture," noting several specific points, including these examples, as articulated in the document:

- *In fiscal year (FY) 2018, the budget officer notified administrative unit heads and academic department chairs that beginning in FY19 the college would use a zero-based budget approach...*
- *Associate Dean of Academic Affairs Mona Sedrak started a process that educates department chairs on budgets where personnel are concerned. Use of student workers, area coordinators, advising, revenue and expense by program and overall budget updates are discussed at weekly department chair meetings.*

The report goes on to describe briefly the use of assessment results in Academic Program Review, citing specific completed reviews in several areas and how these are analyzed by the various committees responsible for providing input to the Program Review Committee, which discusses these "*independent reviews and agrees on feedback, recommendations for improvement and an overall rating.*"

Noting the importance of assessment in curriculum review, the report provides an overview of the institution's process for proposing new courses, using appropriate templates such as the Program Proposal and Approval Form, which was recently implemented and "*requires a more robust analysis of a proposed program to ensure that it fulfills the following:*"

- *Aligns with the college's mission*
- *Supports the college's strategic plan*
- *Meets the market demand or community need*
- *Considers implications on existing or new institutional resources (financial, human, facilities, technology, support services)*

This section concludes with an overview of the use of program review, and assessment results in measuring progress/achievement in specific strategic areas, as cited in the report:

- *Strategic Direction One: Distinction in Academics*
- *Strategic Direction Three: Lead in Innovation*
- *Strategic Direction Five: Responsibility in Stewardship.*

Each of these three is explicated in multiple goals, stated in the report. For example, Goal One in Strategic Direction Three reads like this: “*Goal One: Engage in continuous environmental scanning to improve and develop on campus an online program certificate and course offerings.*”

IV. Revised institutional policy for credit hours addressing all delivery formats

The report describes succinctly the institution’s actions in the revision of its credit hour policy, noting the University’s research of the credit hour policies of other institutions. The modified policy has been installed, implemented and made available on the institution’s website.

V. Verifying learning outcomes across all modes of delivery.

This section of the report makes specific reference to the institution’s practices regarding syllabi collection and review, noting in particular the course syllabi review that takes place as part of the program review process, during which those documents are examined “*to ensure compliance with the official learning outcomes in eCurriculum, UC’s curriculum management system.*” The report states further that additional review will take place beginning in Fall 2018, when the institution will begin annual examination of 25% of all course syllabi from courses offered the previous academic year.

STAFF FINDING:

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s) Core Component 3.B

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.

Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.

Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.

Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s) Core Component 3.E

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

- Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.
- Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s) Core Component 4.B

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

- Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.
- Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s): Federal Compliance pertaining to credit hours.

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

- Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.
- Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

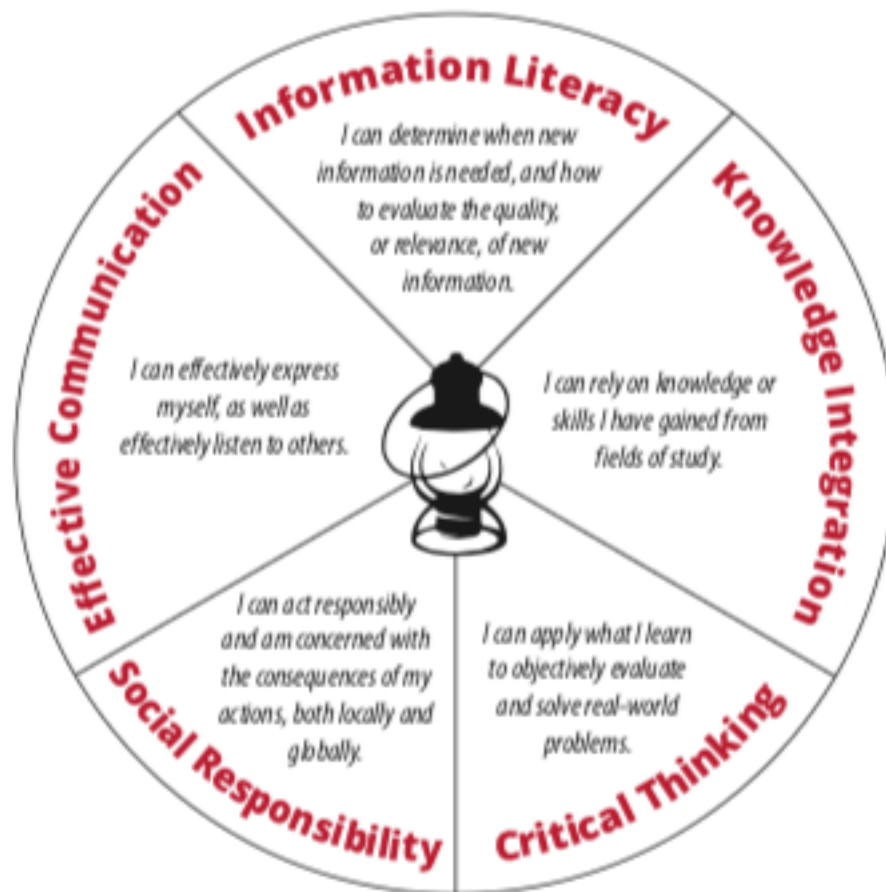
REPORT ANALYSIS: Materials presented in the University of Cincinnati-Clermont interim report indicate that the institution has made progress in each of the areas identified in the Team Report of the institution's 2016 Comprehensive Evaluation.

More specifically, the institution has worked diligently to establish coherent and workable general education learning outcomes based on the five core competencies (the *Clermont Core*) that serve as the foundation for both general education and programmatic learning outcomes (CC 3.B). With regard to general education, these competencies are assessed within the four categories of general education courses listed in the report and noted in the Report Summary above.

The institution has also taken steps to enlarge and enhance participation of the faculty and staff in learning outcomes assessment--and thereby improve the culture of assessment on campus (CC 4.B). The report cites several initiatives/actions designed partly for this purpose, including participation in the Higher Learning Commission's Assessment Academy through the formation of the institution's Academy Team ("the away team") and other working groups ("the home team") that would collaborate with the Academy Team in the development of the core competencies. Both groups comprised significant faculty and staff representation; the faculty and staff participants are listed in the report narrative or in the report's appendices.

As noted in the Report Summary section, these efforts resulted in the development of the "I can" statements that serve as prompts for the competencies. These are represented graphically in the image below.

Clermont Core



Indications are that the institution has proceeded carefully with further steps, separating into two phases the areas that would receive substantial attention (“*cross-discipline/college discussions about assessment*”) in academic and co-curricular assessment. These two phases would take place in successive years (AY2017-2018 and AY2018-2019). Both phases include units involved in co-curricular assessment, while academic units are situated largely in Phase 1 (CC 3.E).

The institution’s revised credit hour policy is consistent with the Federal definition and HLC guidelines pertaining to the academic credit hour. For example, the section titled Formalized Instruction Requirement contains this language:

A semester credit hour is earned for a minimum of 750 total instructional minutes of classroom instruction, with a normal expectation of at least two (or three hours for two sessions-a week classes) of outside study (homework, reading assignments, preparation for class) for each class session (meeting time). Typically, a Fall/Spring three-semester credit hour full-semester length course meets for three 55-minute sessions per week or for two 80-minute sessions per week for the length of the semester, resulting in the required 2,250 instructional minute minimum and 90 total hours of work outside of the classroom.

Moreover, the policy states “*UC requires this policy to be practiced by all faculty, full-time and part-time. All definitions and standards apply equally to courses offered both on and off campus.*”

Analysis Concluding Statement: The institution has presented an effectively constructed report and is to be commended on the quality of the document. And, as noted above, the materials supplied in the report indicate improvement in all areas identified in the most recent HLC Comprehensive Evaluation in 2016.

However, there remains work to be done, particularly with regard to co-curricular and general education assessment. This is not a criticism; it appears that the institution is moving ahead steadily in these areas. For example, it can be inferred from the report that completed co-curricular learning outcomes are to be developed during Phase two of the initiative describe in the report, at which point the institution will possess a full complement of these outcomes and will be able to assess them. Nonetheless, it is evident that co-curricular assessment is still a work in progress.

With regard to general education assessment, it appears that all essential factors are in place, but it isn’t clear from the report the extent to which general education assessment has taken place. Again, there is no criticism implied here, as the University’s efforts in developing the Clermont Core and linking general education and programmatic outcomes to the core have established a firm foundation for assessing general education learning. Again, though, these actions are fairly recent and will need to be tested over time. (Note: Review of the institution’s website shows that the University has provided a thorough list of the institution’s academic programs; however, reference to the Clermont Core was absent from the website—or perhaps just difficult to locate.

Given the importance of the Core to the institution's academic "identity" the University might consider including it on the website if it isn't there already.)

The update on the link between assessment and planning/budgeting indicates that the institution is making clear progress in this area, particularly in the inclusion of assessment results in the program review process and the alignment of curriculum change/additions with the University's planning processes. The Program Proposal and Approval template, which is included in the appendices, confirms this alignment.

The Higher Learning Commission acknowledges the institution's improvement in these areas (CCs 3.B, 3.E, and 4.B) and will not require additional reporting. However, as noted in the Staff Finding section above, all three areas will require ongoing and substantive attention on the part of the institution. The University should assume that the HLC Peer Review Team that conducts the institution's Open Pathway Assurance Review in 2020 will examine closely progress in all areas of assessment—with particular emphasis on assessing student learning in general education and in the co-curriculum.

STAFF ACTION: Receive the report on assessment and credit hours. No further reports are required.

The Open Pathway Assurance Review is scheduled for 2020. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2025– 2026.