



Outcomes Assessment for Continuous Improvement

Policy No. 02.04

I. PURPOSE

- A. Tennessee State University inspires students to innovatively transform our city, state, and world. The University values excellence, learning, accountability, integrity, shared governance, diversity, and service. Outcomes assessment is an essential function for gathering critical information used to inform decision-making leading to continuous improvement of programs and services.
- B. The University has an established comprehensive outcomes assessment program that identifies and assesses the attainment of outcomes for administrative support services and student achievement in educational programs, general education, and academic and student services. This policy describes the process by which the University schedules, conducts, reviews, and approves assessment activities to ensure data are collected and used for seeking improvement.

II. POLICY STATEMENT

- A. For the University's purposes, outcomes assessment activities are expected to be informative and not punitive, and are conducted predominantly for the purposes of enhancing student achievement and improving programs and services. The focus should be placed on the area, rather than singling out individuals.
- B. The University encourages each area to employ methods that will provide indicators for improvement. The University acknowledges that this may involve submitting results with low success rates with respect to the target in question and considers this a mark of effective assessment. The aim is not to show that the area is performing well. Rather, the aim is to determine how instruction and services might be improved.
- C. The annual assessment cycle followed at the University includes two phases (Phase I – Planning and Phase II – Results Reporting). In early fall of each year, assessment plans are developed or revised to include the mission or purpose statement, outcomes, methods and measures of assessment. In late spring for student outcomes and summer

for administrative outcomes, results, plans of action, and evidence of improvement are reported.

- D. All outcome assessment plans are maintained in an electronic repository, *Campus Labs Compliance Assist*.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. Area – includes all responsible for providing assessments (i.e., office, department, unit, school, college, center, or institute, depending on the type of outcome).
- B. Division – includes areas that directly report to the president.
- C. Unit – includes areas that directly report to a vice president.
- D. Administrative Department – includes those that directly report to a unit head.
- E. Assessment – in higher education, includes gathering information in a prescribed manner and interpreting that information to make decisions about policy, curriculum, instruction, initiatives, or assessment practices.
- F. Outcome – the results that an area desires to attain, expressed in general terms.
- G. Methods – strategies, along with tools or instruments, used to gauge progress toward attaining outcomes. Method statements should clearly indicate *who* will conduct the assessment; *who* will be assessed; *when, where, and how* it will be assessed; and *what* specifically will be assessed.
 - 1. Direct – assessment tools that evaluate actual performance. Examples include exam scores, portfolios, observations, records of error, time, cost, efficiency, productivity, etc.
 - 2. Indirect – assessment tools that evaluate perceived learning or performance based on opinions. Examples include student or employer perceptions, perceived satisfaction levels, perceived timeliness, perceived capability, etc.
- H. Measures – observations of achievement reported in numeric terms.
- I. Targets – desired level of performance or attainment expressed in specific terms.
- J. Results – the findings amassed from the corresponding method.
- K. Action Plans – future steps to be taken toward attaining continuous improvement based on the reported results.

- L. Evidence of Improvement – current performance level achieved as compared to previous levels achieved, expressed in specific terms; intended to present result patterns from semester to semester, year to year, etc.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES OUTCOME PROCEDURES

- A. Administrative support outcomes identify core functions for providing effective and efficient administrative services in support of the mission of the university. Administrative support service units provide leadership and management services in meeting the university's mission. Administrative support services units are those units that contribute to the operation of the University without directly promoting students' educational development or personal well-being. Administrators for each identified administrative support service area will lead staff discussions to gain collective input and consensus to create and assess appropriate, measurable expected outcomes for each administrative support service area.
- B. All areas that directly report to a vice president (units), as well as those that directly report to unit heads (administrative departments) as demonstrated on official published division organizational charts, are required to identify and measure administrative support service outcomes.
- C. Phase I consists of creating a system for assessment of administrative support service outcomes. Phase I begins with a thorough review of the area's mission. Mission statements should be:
 - 1. brief and clearly stated;
 - 2. distinctive to the area;
 - 3. reflective of the core purpose, primary functions and activities of the administrative support service area; and
 - 4. consistent with the mission of the university, division, unit, department, and office.
- D. Once the mission is in place, at least three measurable outcomes specific to the administrative support service area are identified. These outcomes should align with the mission and primary functions of the administrative support service area. Ideally, these outcome statements should reflect continuous improvement of services. Outcomes:
 - 1. focus on issues pertinent and important to the administrative support service area as specifically defined in the mission statement;
 - 2. focus on key areas where outcomes assessment will enable the administrative support service area to improve, emphasizing the end result and not the means to get there; and
 - 3. clearly articulate the intended result or action desired.

- E. Each identified outcome should include two methods of measurement that will be used to assess achievement of the corresponding outcome. Multiple methods of measurement are necessary to build reliability and validity. Direct methods are preferred. Method statements should:
1. align with the intent of the outcome;
 2. apply to service, regardless of location or mode of delivery;
 3. allow for the collection of accurate, valid, and reliable data for each method and measure in a reasonable and efficient manner within the academic year;
 4. provide detail on *who* will conduct the assessment; *who* will be assessed; *when*, *where*, *and how* it will be assessed; and *what* specifically will be assessed; and
 5. clearly indicate the desired level or target of performance.
- F. Once the outcomes, methods and measures are in place, a system should be developed for implementation and assessment. This system should identify:
1. how, where, and when the service will be provided;
 2. who will be involved in the implementation and measurement process;
 3. what instruments and scoring rubrics will be needed to quantify results;
 4. when the services will be measured; and
 5. how the data will be evaluated.
- G. Phase II consists of collecting and analyzing the assessment data. Assessment results should be reported in a brief, but detailed summary for each method and measure. Discussions of findings should include:
1. a reflection upon and discussion of the findings amassed from the corresponding method and measure;
 2. results based on reliable and valid data collection methods;
 3. a level of achievement of performance targets;
 4. indicators for further improvement that can be gleaned from the results;
 5. evidence of achievement related to the outcome aggregated for all services and disaggregated based on mode or location of delivery and other pertinent factors; and
 6. effectiveness of previous action plans for attaining results;
- H. Based on the assessment results, a plan of action should be developed. Action plans should be feasible considering the availability of time and resources and should lead to continuous improvement of services.
- I. A synopsis of year-to-year evidence of improvement gained from actions taken based on previous outcomes assessments should also be provided. This evidence of improvement

should focus on continuous improvement of services and should be documented with improvements cited in the assessment results.

- J. Once completed, outcomes reports are reviewed and approved by the appropriate unit head and vice president.
- K. At the end of each phase of the assessment cycle, outcomes reports are audited by the Assessment and Improvement Committee on Administrative Support Services. Audit reports provide useful feedback for improving outcomes reports.

V. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OUTCOME PROCEDURES

- A. Educational program student learning outcomes identify the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students are expected to demonstrate by the end of their course of study in an educational program. Chairs, directors, and program coordinators for each educational program will lead faculty discussions to gain collective input and consensus to create and assess appropriate, measurable student learning and administrative outcomes for each program.
- B. All educational programs identified by a distinctive four-digit CIP code are required to identify and measure student learning outcomes.
- C. Phase I consists of creating a system for assessment of educational program outcomes. Phase I begins with a thorough review of the program mission. Mission statements should be:
 - 1. brief and clearly defined;
 - 2. distinctive to the program;
 - 3. reflective of the core purpose, primary functions, and activities of the program; and
 - 4. consistent with the mission of the university, college, and department or school.
- D. Once the mission is in place, at least three measurable student learning outcomes for undergraduate programs and three for graduate programs are identified. These outcomes should align with the mission and overall goals of the program, as well as reflect the level of the program. Ideally, the student learning outcome statements should demonstrate higher levels of cognitive, psychomotor, and affective learning domains. Outcomes:
 - 1. describe the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes of a successful graduate;
 - 2. focus on issues pertinent and important to the program;
 - 3. reflect on learning throughout the program curriculum rather than through elective courses or extracurricular activities;

4. focus on student learning rather than instructional or administrative processes;
and
 5. focus on key areas where outcomes assessment will enable the program to improve.
- E. Each identified outcome should include two methods of measurement that will be used to assess achievement of the corresponding outcome. Multiple methods of measurement are necessary to build reliability and validity. Direct methods are preferred. Method statements should:
1. effectively and accurately reflect learning addressed in the outcome;
 2. align with the type and level of learning indicated in the outcome;
 3. apply to multiple sections of the same course, regardless of location or mode of delivery;
 4. allow for the collection of accurate, valid, and reliable data for each method and measure in a reasonable and efficient manner within the academic year;
 5. provide detail on *who* will be assessed; *when, where, and how* it will be assessed; and *what* specific knowledge, skill, value, or attitude will be assessed and
 6. clearly indicate the desired or target level of performance.
- F. Once the outcomes, methods and measures are in place, a system should be developed for implementation and assessment. This system should identify:
1. how and where the concepts, skills, and values are being taught;
 2. who will be involved in the implementation and measurement process;
 3. how individual student learning will be measured;
 4. what instruments (i.e., exams, assignments) and scoring rubrics will be needed to quantify student learning;
 5. when the learning will be measured; and
 6. how the data will be evaluated.
- G. Phase II consists of collecting and analyzing assessment data. Assessment results should be reported in a brief, but detailed summary for each method and measure. Discussions of findings should include:
1. a reflection upon and discussion of the findings amassed from the corresponding method and measure;
 2. results based on reliable and valid data collection methods;
 3. level of success in achieving the desired performance target;
 4. indicators for further improvement that can be gleaned from the results;
 5. evidence of learning related to the outcome aggregated for all sections of the course and disaggregated based on delivery, location, mode, and other pertinent factors;
 6. student accomplishments and success;

7. improvement over previous assessment cycles; and
 8. effectiveness of previous action plans for attaining results.
- H. Based on the assessment results, a plan of action should be developed. Action plans should be feasible considering the availability of time and resources and should lead to continuous improvement in student learning.
- I. A synopsis of evidence of improvement gained from actions taken based on previous outcomes assessments should also be provided. This evidence of improvement should focus on continuous improvement in student learning and should be documented with improvements cited in the assessment results.
- J. Once completed, outcomes reports are reviewed and approved by the appropriate department chair and college dean.
- K. At the end of each phase of the assessment cycle, outcomes reports are audited by members of the Assessment and Improvement Committee on Educational Programs and Student Learning. Audit reports provide useful feedback for improving outcomes reports.

VI. GENERAL EDUCATION OUTCOME PROCEDURES

- A. General education student learning outcomes identify the core components and competencies that students are expected to demonstrate by the end of their course of study. Members of the General Education Committee (GEC) will lead faculty discussions to gain collective input and consensus to create and assess appropriate, measurable student learning outcomes for general education.
- B. The GEC, with the guidance of the Chair of the GEC, will develop and assign a mission statement for each component. The GEC will also develop an outcome for each component and competency and assign outcomes to courses approved in each component.
- C. All academic units providing general education core courses are required to measure general education student learning outcomes as identified by the GEC.
- D. Phase I consists of creating a system for assessment of general education student learning outcomes and includes a review of the mission statement and outcomes assigned to the approved general education course.
- E. For each identified outcome, a method of measurement should be identified to assess achievement in student learning. Direct methods are expected. Method statements should:

1. effectively and accurately reflect learning addressed in the outcome;
 2. apply to all sections of the same course, regardless of location or mode of delivery;
 3. allow for the collection of accurate, valid, and reliable data for each method and measure in a reasonable and efficient manner within the academic year;
 4. provide detail on *who* will be assessed; *when, where, and how* it will be assessed; and *what* specific knowledge, skill, value, or attitude will be assessed; and
 5. clearly indicate the desired level or target level of performance.
- F. Once the outcomes, methods and measures are in place, a system should be developed for implementation and assessment. This system should identify:
1. how and where the concepts, skills, and values are being taught;
 2. who will be involved in the implementation and measurement process;
 3. how individual general education student learning will be measured;
 4. what instruments (i.e., exams, assignments) and scoring rubrics will be needed to quantify student learning;
 5. when the learning will be measured; and
 6. how the data will be evaluated.
- G. Phase II consists of collecting and analyzing assessment data. Assessment results should be reported in a brief, but detailed summary for each method and measure. Discussions of findings should include:
1. a reflection upon and discussion of the findings amassed from the corresponding method and measure;
 2. results based on reliable and valid data collection methods;
 3. level of success in achieving the desired performance target;
 4. indicators for further improvement that can be gleaned from the results;
 5. evidence of learning related to the outcome aggregated for all sections of the course and disaggregated based on delivery, location, mode, and other pertinent factors;
 6. student accomplishments and success;
 7. improvement over previous assessment cycles; and
 8. effectiveness of previous action plans for attaining results.
- H. Based on the assessment results, a plan of action should be developed. Action plans should be feasible considering the availability of time and resources and should lead to continuous improvement in general education student learning.
- I. A synopsis of evidence of improvement gained from actions taken based on previous outcomes assessments should also be provided. This evidence of improvement should focus on continuous improvement in general education student learning and should be documented with improvements cited in the assessment results.

- J. Once completed, outcomes reports are reviewed and approved by the appropriate department chair or school director and the assistant vice president for Academic Services on behalf of the GEC.
- K. At the end of each phase of the assessment cycle, outcomes reports are audited by the appropriate members of the GEC. Audit reports provide useful feedback for improving outcomes reports.

VII. ACADEMIC AND STUDENT SERVICES OUTCOME PROCEDURES

- A. Academic and student service outcomes identify core functions for providing academic and student services in support of student learning and supporting students as they progress through their educational journey. Directors and administrators for each identified area across applicable divisions (e.g., Student Affairs, Academic Affairs) will lead faculty and staff discussions to gain collective input and consensus to create and assess appropriate, measurable outcomes for each academic and student service area.
- B. All academic and student service areas are required to identify and measure academic and student service outcomes.
- C. Phase I consists of creating a system for assessment of academic and student service outcomes. Phase I begins with a thorough review of the area's mission. Mission statements should be:
 - 1. brief and clearly stated;
 - 2. distinctive to the area;
 - 3. reflective of the core purpose, primary functions and activities of the academic and student service area; and
 - 4. consistent with the mission of the University, division, unit, department, and office.
- D. Once the mission is in place, at least three measurable outcomes specific to the academic and student service area are identified. At least one outcome should be identified for each core service offered by the unit. These outcomes should align with the mission and primary functions of the academic and student service area. Ideally, these outcome statements should reflect continuous improvement of services at impacting student learning. Outcomes:
 - 1. describe impact of academic and student service on student success;
 - 2. focus on issues pertinent and important to the academic and student service area as specifically defined in the mission statement;

3. focus on key areas where outcomes assessment will enable the academic and student service area to improve emphasizing the end result and not the means to get there; and
 4. clearly articulate the intended result.
- E. Each identified outcome should include two methods of measurement that will be used to assess achievement of the corresponding outcome. Multiple methods of measurement are necessary to build reliability and validity. Direct methods are preferred. Method statements should:
1. align with the intent of the outcome;
 2. apply to academic or student service, regardless of location or mode of delivery;
 3. allow for the collection of accurate, valid, and reliable data for each method and measure in a reasonable and efficient manner within the academic year;
 4. provide detail on *who* will conduct the assessment; *who* will be assessed; *when*, *where*, and *how* it will be assessed; and for student learning outcomes, *what* specific knowledge, skill, value, or attitude will be assessed; and
 5. clearly indicate the desired level or target level of performance.
- F. Once the outcomes, methods and measures are in place, a system should be developed for implementation and assessment. This system should identify:
1. how, where, and when the service will be provided;
 2. who will be involved in the implementation and measurement process;
 3. how impact of service on student success will be measured;
 4. what instruments and scoring rubrics will be needed to quantify results;
 5. when the services impacting student success will be measured; and
 6. how the data will be evaluated.
- G. Phase II consists of collecting and analyzing the assessment data. Assessment results should be reported in a brief, but detailed summary for each method and measure. Discussions of findings should include:
1. a reflection upon and discussion of the findings amassed from the corresponding method and measure;
 2. results based on reliable and valid data collection methods;
 3. level of success in achieving the desired performance targets;
 4. indicators for further improvement that can be gleaned from the results;
 5. evidence of learning related to the outcome aggregated for all services and disaggregated based on mode or location of delivery and other pertinent factors;
 6. student accomplishments and success, when possible;
 7. improvement over previous assessment cycles; and
 8. effectiveness of previous action plans for attaining results.

- H. Based on the assessment results, a plan of action should be developed. Action plans should be feasible considering the availability of time and resources and should lead to continuous improvement of academic and student services.
- I. A synopsis of improvement gained from actions taken based on previous outcomes assessments should also be provided. This evidence of improvement should focus on continuous improvement in academic and student services and its impact on student success and should be documented with improvements cited in the assessment results.
- J. Once completed, outcomes reports are reviewed and approved by the appropriate unit head and vice president.
- K. At the end of each phase of the assessment cycle, outcomes reports are audited by the Assessment and Improvement Committee on Academic and Student Services. Audit reports provide useful feedback for improving outcomes reports.

Adopted: June 2020