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University Assessment Council
Minutes of the April 12, 2011 Meeting

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Present: Meredith Bryk, Anne Chandler, Jan Chlebowski, Jeff Delafuente, Herschell Emery, Vennie Filippas, Kim Isringhausen, Christina Lindholm, James Mays, K. Stone, Seth Sykes, Lex Tartaglia, Kathy Ingram, Scott Oates.

Minutes from March 8, 2011

- The minutes were approved.

Discussion: Assessment Quality Review (AQR)

a. <u>Purpose of AQR</u>. Council members discussed the following language, which Scott had drafted to describe the purpose of the AQR:

> Review a degree program's learning outcomes assessment practices for <u>usefulness</u>. Useful assessment practices confirm expectations for student learning and/or inform ways to improve student learning.
>
> *A review is a formal and critical assessment of a program, process, or product with the possibility or intention of instituting change if necessary.*

Council members expressed favorable opinions about the language. There was some discussion about whether (and, if so, where) to add language stating that assessment is required for accountability purposes. Another suggestion was to distinguish what AQR is from why we do it (continuous improvement and accountability).

b. <u>Uses of AQR Findings</u>. Council members commented on the language (below) that Scott had drafted. He wants to create a document with one-sentence statements that could be supported by another page with more explanation.

   i.   The Assessment Council will use findings to commend and show case best practices in assessment at VCU.
   ii. Programs/Departments and the Office of Assessment will use findings to improve the usefulness of their assessment practices.
   iii. Programs/Departments may use review findings for reporting purposes (e.g., accrediting agencies; program review; etc.)
   iv. Academic Affairs will use AQR findings to prepare summative reports to SACS and/or other stakeholder as necessary.

Council members expressed favorable views about this draft language. Suggestions and comments focused on the sequence of the statements, as well as understanding and responding to resistance people may have about assessment.

c. <u>AQR Criteria</u>. Scott distributed a handout, *Assessment Quality Review Criteria and Evaluation Sheet*. Council members formed small groups, each of which was assigned to discuss one of the first four standards. Each group offered suggestions about what type of evidence would meet the criteria for the particular standard, as well as how and where the evidence might be gathered.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday, May 10
12:30-2:00
Center for Teaching Excellence
Harris Hall 5182

Discussion: Assessment Quality Review (AQR)

a. Purpose of AQR. Council members discussed the language Scott had drafted.

⇨ There was some discussion about whether (and, if so, where) to add language stating that assessment is required for accountability purposes.

⇨ Another suggestion was to distinguish what AQR is from why we do it (continuous improvement and accountability).

⇨ Some members favored including "hammer" language in the purpose section, emphasizing that we must assess student learning outcomes to comply with requirements of external regulators.

b. Uses of AQR Findings. Council members commented on the language Scott had drafted.

⇨ Suggestions and comments focused on the sequence of the statements, as well as understanding and responding to resistance people may have about assessment.

⇨ Again, some members favored emphasizing the "hammer" language, by moving "iii" up to the first position.

⇨ There was disagreement about how/whether to use the AQR to wed curricular requirements "across disciplines" (e.g., between University College and the majors). Some believe that is a curriculum discussion, not an assessment discussion.

c. AQR Criteria. Scott distributed a handout, *Assessment Quality Review Criteria and Evaluation Sheet*. Comments from the small group discussion (key points are starred) about what type of evidence would meet the criteria for the particular standard, as well as how and where the evidence might be gathered.

- Standard 1: Program Goals and/or Mission Statement

  o ** Perhaps say "if appropriate." (For *some* programs, accreditors require mission statement and program goals.)
  o Most programs have mission statements in WEAVE or on program website.
    ▪ However, some programs may have mission statement in WEAVE only.
    ▪ In some instances, school/department has missions statement – distinguish form mission statement for program
  o "Program goals" may be somewhat vague
  o Programs probably do not evaluate their goals and/or mission statement periodically unless program is accredited.
  o Sources of evidence:
    ▪ Program minutes
    ▪ In some programs, difficult to identify evidence because only a couple of people in the program even know what the program goals are.
  o What is "public"?
    ▪ Could be bulleted list on program website if done systematically

- Standard 2: Learning Outcomes

  - ** Pharmacy: At first-year orientation, program gives students a hard copy of student learning outcomes.
  - What does "public" mean?
    - Department/school webpage – should/could include program-level learning outcomes
    - But don't want program outcomes to be laundry list of course outcomes.
    - Should be in students' hands.
  - "High quality learning outcome" – people need to know what it means
  - How to determine *validity* of SLOs?
    - Somewhat subjective.
    - *Not* valid: counter to evidence-based practice in a field.
    - ** "Relevant" seems like a better concept here.
    - (Validity is more of a measurement issue.)

- Standard 3: Curriculum and Pedagogy

  - Part "a" – curriculum mapping -- is #1 priority in this standard
  - Some programs have curriculum maps; others do not.
  - Evidence:
    - syllabi – what you say you will do
    - actually developing a curriculum map
    - classroom visits/observation
    - exit interviews
    - questions on course evaluations
  - ** Could provide a curriculum mapping template that programs would upload as attachment in WEAVE. (WEAVE curriculum mapping tool is cumbersome.)
  - Pedagogy: Is there an *effective* mix of teaching pedagogy?
  - ** Recommend deleting references to "pedagogy"
    - Delete part "c"
    - Delete "pedagogy" from parts f" and "g"

- Standard 4: Assessment Processes

  - Evidence for various parts of this standard:
    - "a" and "b': Look at your assessment plan and curriculum map and then show you followed it.
    - "c": curriculum map
    - "d" and "e": minutes of committee meetings
  - ** Part "e": Delete "validity, and reliability."