MARYLAND
INSTITUTE
COLLEGE
OF ART / **M|I|C/A**

Principles and Practices of Student Learning Assessment

The purpose of learning assessment at MICA is to examine, in systematic ways, students' achievement relative to the goals of our educational programs. Engagement in learning assessment leads to the enhancement of the educational experience of our students; improvement in teaching and learning; and fulfillment of our obligation to be accountable to the public and our accrediting bodies for our claims about student learning.

The following is a set of principles and practices to guide the assessment of student learning at MICA. These principles and practices were developed with the intention that they promote a shared understanding of assessment of student learning at MICA, as well as provide guidelines for meaningful assessment practices.

It is expected that the principles articulated here will be long-standing and will underpin assessment activities at MICA within the degree programs as well as other academic and student affairs areas that are responsible for the co-curriculum.

The practices listed here are not an exhaustive listing of possible best practices. Instead, these practices are meant to help faculty put the principles in action. It may be necessary to periodically adjust these practices as experience with student learning assessment develops.

The Institutional Assessment Committee (IAC) will revisit the principles and practices noted here at least every five years and make revisions as appropriate.

Principles

1. Assessment is a reflective and ongoing process, the primary purpose of which is the improvement of student learning. This is accomplished by using student learning assessment results to improve program structure, content, and pedagogy.

2. A variety of methods appropriate to the unique programs and outcomes being assessed can be used. However, direct evidence of student learning must be incorporated into assessment practices for student learning outcomes that are knowledge or skills-based.

3. Assessment plans should be simple, specific, and realistic: able to be fully implemented given the usual constraints of faculty/staff time and departmental resources.

4. In addition to their role in driving curricular and pedagogical change, assessment results will be used for decision making in planning and improvement processes. However, programmatic student learning assessment results will not be used for the evaluation of individual faculty/staff or to make comparisons across programs, departments, or areas of the College.

5. MICA is committed to the development of an ongoing program of student learning assessment and will provide appropriate resources to facilitate and improve the quality of student learning assessment at the College.

Practices

1. Program learning outcomes (PLOs) should clearly state what students are expected to know, be able to do, and/or value at the end of a degree or co-curricular program.
   a. Programs are encouraged to have no more than six learning outcomes.
   b. PLOs should align with but not duplicate the Institutional Learning Outcomes, the General Studies and General Education Outcomes specified by NASAD and MSCHE (at the undergraduate level), or the outcomes associated with graduate liberal arts elective courses.
   c. The expected level of proficiency for each PLO should be specified.
   d. Programs should produce a curricular/activity map to indicate where and at what level their PLOs are embedded within individual courses/activities of the program.

2. The success of the program in achieving its learning outcomes should be evaluated relative to clearly defined standards for success and by using appropriate and specific evidence of student learning.
   a. Direct evidence should be used for the assessment of outcomes related to skills and knowledge.
   b. Rubrics with specific agreed-upon criteria for evaluating student work should be used when direct evidence is subjective in nature (e.g. a piece of creative work).
   c. Resulting data from direct and indirect assessment should be analyzed and compared to previously determined standards.

3. When using direct evidence to assess student learning, using embedded student work minimizes the burden of assessment on students and faculty.
   a. A curricular map can be used to identify the courses/activities in which evidence for assessment might be collected.
   b. Evidence gathered near the end of the program of study can be a particularly effective way to assess the ability of students to apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired over time. Capstone courses and senior portfolios are good sources of this type of evidence.

4. Programs should use indirect evidence such as NSSE, GSS, and other survey data when possible.
    a. Indirect evidence is especially useful when assessing outcomes that are dispositional or have to do with values (e.g. ethics).
    b. While indirect evidence can be used to supplement direct evidence of skill and knowledge attainment, it is not sufficient for the assessment of those outcomes.

5. Programs need to be involved in and document their assessment activities annually.
    a. The type of engagement in annual assessment may vary across programs.
        i.   Programs with a large number of students will likely complete one full cycle of assessment for one or two learning outcomes each year.
        ii. Programs that graduate few students each year may collect and evaluate data for one or more outcomes each year, but not complete the analysis phases of assessment until they have several years of data on which to make useful summary judgments about student learning.
        iii. Co-curricular programs may need to look at what data can be collected (internal and external to the department) to determine when and how to complete a full cycle of assessment.
    b. Use of the department assessment report template provided by IAC will facilitate the documentation of assessment processes, tools, results, and use of results. In any case, the program's assessment report should include:
        i.   The learning outcomes of the program.
        ii. A curricular/activity map of the program.
        iii. The method(s) by which student learning has been assessed; including a copy of any rubrics used to evaluate student work.
        iv. A summary of the data produced in the process of assessment.
        v.   The conclusions that have been drawn from the analysis of the assessment data.
        vi. A discussion of the pedagogical or programmatic changes, if any, that have been discussed or implemented as a result of this analysis.

6. Programs that need assistance with designing their assessment or analyzing their assessment data should consult the resources found on the Assessment of Student Learning webpage, https://www.mica.edu/mica-dna/teaching-and-learning/assessment-of-student-learning/. For individual consultations, programs in academic affairs should contact Terra Schehr, Associate Vice President for Educational Planning & Development. Programs in Student Affairs should contact Megan Miller, Associate Dean for Student Integrated Learning.