

# Middle States 2012 Assessment at a Glance

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## Accountability, Accreditation and Assessment

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Nationally, institutions of higher education will continue to face greater accountability to wider audiences than in the past with focus on:

- Clarity on how outcomes relate to strategy plans, mission, goals
- Student outcomes and quality of measures and processes
- Call for evidence of how assessment is used in decision making and planning

The role of accreditation is to provide institutions with a framework for:

- Defining standards and benchmarks
- Articulating outcomes in meaningful ways
- Using peers as external evaluators of our progress

Assessment has always been a part of our work and this is an opportunity to:

- Identify the current assessments and areas for improvement
- Make connections between assessments across campus
- Increase ways we use evidence to inform decisions

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## Middle States Assessment Standards

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Two of the fourteen Middle States Standards deal with assessment.

Standard 7: institutional Assessment looks at our campus wide use of assessment and

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning is more specific to student knowledge and skills.

Middle States evaluators will look at the self-study considering how we have interpreted and applied the standards to our institutional context and what evidence we provide related to the standards.

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## Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

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*The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.*

More specifically, elements of Standard 7 include:

- Documented, organized, and sustained assessment process to evaluate and improve the total range of programs and services
- Mission and goals are integrated
- Use of multiple outcome measures
- Measures relate to the goals they are assessing
- Faculty and administration involvement
- Clear and realistic time table
- Simplicity, practicality, detail, and ownership to be sustainable
- Assessment of the assessment process
- Evidence that results are related to the mission and shared

## SUNY Cortland Assessment Plan Elements

Assessment Element	Reference
Overall Assessment Plan	Plan
Assessment Philosophy	Statement
Student Learning Outcomes (Goals)	Goals
Assessment Policies	Policies
Student Learning Outcome Measures (Direct)	Measures
Student Learning Outcome Measures (Indirect)	Measures
Student Learning Outcome Measure Usage (Direct and Indirect)	Measures - Usage
Banner, Database Retrieval	CAPP example
Online Interface, Retrieval/Analysis	Tutorial
SPSS Statistical Analysis	
Online Surveys	Surveys
College Assessment Committee Grants to Improve Assessment	Grants Listing

## Levels of Assessment

Level of Assessment	SUNY Cortland Examples
National	National Survey of Student Engagement Student Opinion Survey Collegiate Learning Assessment
New York State	New York State Education Department Reports New York State Teacher Certification Exams
SUNY	General Education Assessment Program Review
Campus	Annual Reports Faculty Workload Enrollment Student Teacher Evaluation College Assessment Grants
Accreditation	Middle States NCATE Accreditations for Academic Programs and Offices

## Standard 14: Assessing Student Learning

*Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.*

The critical elements of Standard 14 are:

- Written results
- Written learning outcomes
- Sustained outcome measures related to goals (reliable and valid)
- Both direct and indirect measures
- Assessment of the assessment process
- Students attaining learning outcomes (program/institution)
- Results used to improve teaching and learning
- Documented use of outcomes

The assessment of student learning takes place at the course level, in programs and departments, and institutionally through initiatives such as teacher accreditation and general education assessment. The table below illustrates our general education assessment process in relation to requirements of Standard 14.

General Education Assessment Process	Standard 14 Elements
Goals and Learning Outcomes for Each GE Category	Written learning outcomes
A General Education Assessment Plan is approved by the Faculty Senate with a cycle of evaluation for each category	Assessment of assessment process; Sustained outcome measures related to goals
Assessment instruments (standardized and course embedded) are reviewed by the GE committee	Direct measures of student learning
Approved rubrics are used to score and scale the student performance on measures (e.g., from Not Meeting Standard to Exceeding Standard)	Students attainment of learning outcomes
Results of the instruments are aggregated into a written report	Written results
Findings are reviewed by departments and the GE committee and feedback on findings and methods are solicited	Assessment of the assessment process
Results documented in reports, used in accreditation and used in department annual reports	Documented use of outcomes Results utilized for improvement
Assessment plan revised to reflect feedback on process and strive for more meaningful assessment	Assessment of assessment process

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## Closing the Loop: How Do We Use What We Learn?

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One of the biggest assessment questions is how do we use assessment findings to inform our work? We need to show evidence that we share results, process findings, and use that information to inform change and decision making. The following are a few campus examples of closing the loop:

### Curricular Developments

- Childhood Education using Student Teacher Evaluation findings to develop new activities and assessments focused on helping candidates (our students) better assess student learning and understand differentiated instruction.
- Geography using findings to create a major in Geographical Information Systems from an existing concentration and expanding internship opportunities.

### Programming Changes

- Advisement and Transition using feedback from Orientation presenter and participant surveys to create new information sessions, add a tour of Alumni House, and restructure the program schedule.
- Creation of more extensive and ongoing orientation for all new employees based on exit interviews and other data collected through Human Resources.

### Campus Wide

- Surveys and focus groups to revise the college mission statement and clarify and articulate campus values and priorities.

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## Assessment Recommendations: Examples from Our Self Study

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### Recommendations to Improve Documentation of Assessment

- Utilize information management software for submission of annual reports to gather information more effectively and efficiently.

### Recommendations to Improve Sharing of Data

- Make findings of all assessments more accessible (e.g., expanded IRA website)
- Explore the further development of data management strategies

### Recommendation for Increased Use of Evidence in Decision Making and Planning

- Proposals/Requests for President's Cabinet review should include notification of how the request contributes to and supports the institutional priorities as defined in the strategic plan.

### Recommendations to Expand Assessment

- Student learning in the first year
- Summer and winter Course Teaching Evaluation policy
- Devise a more effective ways of assessing: student engagement, social awareness, transformational education, experiential learning and global competence
- Development and tracking of co-curricular learning outcomes
- Evaluate the College's plan for assessing learning outcomes related to diversity

For more information, including SUNY Cortland's Assessment Plan and details on material presented above, visit SUNY Cortland Middle States online: <http://www2.cortland.edu/about/accreditations/middle-states/>

Visit SUNY Cortland Institutional Research and Assessment for Quick Data, Assessment, Institutional Reporting and Accreditation information.