University Assessment Council
February 3, 2010, 10:00 a.m.
AUSC 2109
Minutes

Members Present: Drew Clark (Chair), Donna Angarano, George Crandell, Susan Hubbard, Leonard Lock, Nels Madsen, Sharon McDonough, Paul Patterson, Constance Relihan, Greg Somers, Jennifer Schuessler, Tin Yau Tam, and Iryna Johnson.

Guests Present: Juliet Rumble, Cecilia Champion, and Rebecca O’Neal Dagg

Drew covered the main changes in the assessment database and asked for feedback on these changes. Nels raised the question about the screen where programs enter expected outcomes: are these all expected outcomes or only those outcomes that are being assessed in a certain year? Should there be a comprehensive list of program outcomes or only a shorter list of outcomes being assessed in a given year? Programs in some colleges (e.g., Architecture) are already required to provide a comprehensive list of outcomes for the purposes of accreditation. In Education there are 15 proficiencies that each degree program has to assess. However, in programs that do not have professional accreditation, providing a comprehensive list of expected outcomes would require more work for these programs. And, one can expect a better compliance with a shorter list. Comprehensive lists might also take a long time to produce, possibly at the expense of assessment. Overall the group agreed that a shorter list of outcomes being assessed in a particular academic year is a better alternative for now. It was suggested that requiring a complete set of outcomes might be considered for the next year.

Susan raised a question about alignment of program outcomes with general education outcomes. Drew responded that these do not have to always align. If there are general education outcomes that are not addressed in Core Curriculum, than these outcomes should be assessed in each degree program. It was suggested that several changes should be made to the assessment database to indicate that, for all undergraduate programs, alignment with general education outcomes is optional. Examples of undergraduate program outcomes (e.g., life-long learning in Engineering) were provided. One should add an explanation that alignment with general education outcomes is optional (e.g., “if appropriate”). It was also pointed out that one should change the language of general education outcomes in the Assessment database to match the Office of Undergraduate Studies web site.

Drew raised an issue of scheduling the next assessment cycle. Because of changes in the assessment database, we syncopated our assessment cycle by skipping last October. The coming assessment will refer to 2008-2009 academic year. Should we go back to our fall (mid-October) submissions after we are done with the current cycle? The agreement around the table was that we should go back to fall reporting after this cycle.

The next point of discussion was related to the requirement of departmental meetings devoted solely to the issues of assessment. The meeting requirement has not been incorporated in the current assessment database: one can either add it or include it in a parallel communication. It was stated that such meetings would make more sense in fall. Another concern was that, without a well defined procedure, there might be lack of compliance. And, the last thing we want to do is to create a policy that is not followed by everyone. Overall, the group agreed that meetings should not be required for the current assessment cycle.
Nels commented on method typology used in the Assessment database. Faculty observation or a professorial judgment was suggested as a method type. It was also suggested that “samples” and “portfolios” could be combined.

The next point discussed question was “Who needs to report?” Drew pointed out that SACS does not require assessment of minors, though we might want to. UAC members agreed that we should not add such a requirement at Auburn. Graduate certificates should be assessed, however. Currently, these are new programs and there are no students enrolled in these programs. Therefore, it does not apply for the current assessment cycle. The definition of certificate programs was clarified: these are programs lead to a “transcripted” academic credential.

SACS policy on distance education was briefly discussed. SACS requires that “[c]omparability of distance and correspondence education programs to campus-based programs and courses is ensured by evaluation of educational effectiveness, including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction.”

Drew started discussion on administrative and support services as units of assessment. How should one-person units be assessed? Should college-level IT offices be assessed? One suggested option is to require Dean’s offices to submit assessment report that would include outcomes for offices that respond to the Dean’s office. Another suggestion was to assess separate IT offices at the college level together with the university’s IT office. If such practice is adopted, one should require OIT to provide evidence of coordination with offices across campus.

The last topic of discussion was related to units of assessment for research and public service. SACS requires assessing research and public functions. However the standard does not state whether it has to happen at the university or unit level. One could assess research and public functions as projects, but such unit of assessment is undesirable. One can use a certain degree of aggregation, such as Associate Deans for Research. The objection to this approach was that research should be interdisciplinary, same with public service. No agreement on this issue was reached at this point.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.