

NORTHWEST COMMISSION ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

2.2 POLICY ON EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities expects each institution and program to adopt an assessment plan responsive to its mission and its needs. In so doing, the Commission urges the necessity of a **continuing process of academic planning, carrying out of those plans, the assessment of the outcomes, and the influencing of the planning process by the assessment activities.**

As noted in Standard Two, implicit in the mission statement of every institution of higher education is the education of students. Consequently, each institution has an obligation to plan carefully its courses of instruction to respond to student needs, **to evaluate the effectiveness of that education program in terms of the change it brings about in students, and to make improvements** in the program dictated by the evaluative process. **Assessment of educational quality has always been at the heart of the accreditation process.** In earlier times, this assessment tended to focus more upon process measures and structural features.... More recently, ...(we) have come to appreciate the validity and usefulness of using **output evaluations and assessment** as well as input measures.

...The intent of Commission policy is to stress **outcomes assessment as an essential part** of the **ongoing** institutional self-study and accreditation processes, to underline the necessity for each institution to formulate a plan which provides for a **series of outcomes measures** that are internally consistent and in accord with its mission and structure, and, finally, to provide some examples of a variety of successful plans for assessing educational outcomes.

Central to the outcomes analyses or assessments are judgments about the effects of the educational program upon students. These judgments can be made in a variety of ways and can be based upon a variety of data sources. **The more data sources that contribute to the overall judgment, the more reliable that judgment** would seem to be. There follows a list of several outcomes measures which, when used in appropriate combinations and informed by the institutional mission, could yield an efficacious program of outcomes assessment. (List includes enrollment/retention/graduation data; mid-program assessments [e.g. evidence that students are better writers after being exposed to writing across the curriculum], student information data, mid-program assessments, end-of-program assessments, program review and specialized accreditation data, alumni satisfaction, data on dropouts/non-completers, employment and/or employer satisfaction measures...)

2.6 POLICY ON DISTANCE DELIVERY COURSES, CERTIFICATE, AND DEGREE PROGRAMS

Distance education is defined...as a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction occurs when student and instructor are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. Distance education may employ correspondence study, or audio, video or electronically mediated technologies.

w. The institution evaluates the educational effectiveness of its distance education programs (including **assessment of student learning outcomes, student retention and student satisfaction**) to ensure comparability to campus-based programs.

(Emphases added.)