



## FAQs: Assessment at Hartwick College

Assessment of institutional effectiveness refers to an ongoing and intentional process designed to monitor and determine the extent to which our curricular, co-curricular, and institutional areas and processes support the achievement of Hartwick’s Mission. This document provides general information and guidelines around the assessment process at Hartwick. For detailed information contact Kimberly Yousey-Elsener, Dean of Assessment and Retention at [elsenerk@hartwick.edu](mailto:elsenerk@hartwick.edu) or stop by the Office of Academic Affairs in Bresee 205.

1. What is assessment?
2. Why is assessment important?
3. What goals or frameworks shape assessment at Hartwick?
4. Who is responsible for assessing student learning outcomes at Hartwick?
5. Who is responsible for assessing institutional effectiveness outcomes at Hartwick?
6. What timelines and forms do I need to follow/use as part of the formal assessment process at Hartwick?
7. What are the expectations of Middle States in regards to assessment?
8. Where can I go to get help or resources related to assessment?

### 1. What is assessment?

**Assessment –an on-going process of:**

- Establishing clear and measurable outcomes of student learning or operational effectiveness
- Ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes
- Systematically gathering, analyzing and interpreting evidence to determine how well actual performance matches expectations set forth by the outcomes
- Using the resulting information to understand and improve learning and operational processes (Suskie, 2009, p.4)

**“Good Assessment” - quality assessment typically has the following characteristics:**

- Yields reasonable, accurate and truthful information so that we can use assessment results with confidence
- Has a clear purpose, so that assessments can be planned and carried out in a focused, simple and cost effective way

- Engages faculty and staff to ask important questions so that results become an important part of decision making
- Flows from clear and focused goals so that results provide useful information that departments and institutions care about (Suskie, 2009, p.37)

**Student Learning Assessment** - an ongoing systematic process designed by an institution to monitor and improve student learning. It is designed to answer the question: "What will students know, do or feel differently after this experience?" In this process, educators explicitly define what it is they expect students to learn (referred to as learning outcomes); connect those learning outcomes to the learning experience(s) offered; collect data to demonstrate to what extent the learning experience matches the desired outcomes; and uses the information to make appropriate modifications in the learning experience (referred to as the feed-back loop).

**Institutional Assessment or Institutional Effectiveness** - an ongoing systematic process designed by an institution to monitor and improve the quality of the student experience. In this process, departments and programs set goals and gather information that ensures they are meeting stakeholder needs; keeping promises made by the institution's mission and goals; deploying resources effectively, prudently and efficiently (aka being good stewards of resources); serving the public good and/or demonstrating the quality of their work.

## 2. Why is assessment important?

The two primary reasons we engage in assessment is to answer the question "Are we meeting our goals?" and "What are our students learning and how well are they learning it?" The results of assessment provide the data to support a wide variety of institutional, curricular and programmatic needs. For example, assessment data can be used to demonstrate program quality or support requests for needed resources or support. In addition, assessment offers faculty an opportunity to be more reflective about the teaching and learning process. Used in a systematic way, feedback from assessment can help faculty make decisions to improve student learning.

## 3. What goals shape assessment at Hartwick?

Goals are general statements about what we need to accomplish to meet our mission or serve our purpose. Goals typically are more broad and longer-term than an outcome. They are often used to help connect outcomes to a larger idea at an institution. There are two frameworks at Hartwick that set goals for the institution, the *Organizing Principle and Strategic Framework* and the *General Education Student Learning Outcomes*. All assessment outcomes at Hartwick should be connected with one or both of these Frameworks.

- **Organizing Principle and Strategic Framework**  
<http://www.hartwick.edu/organizingprinciple>
  - Improve Student Experience and Satisfaction
  - Maximize the Academic Program
  - Expand Our Financial Base
  - Improve the College's Image and Reputation

- Maximize Employee Performance
- Maximize College Governance
- Maximize Financial Performance
- **Hartwick College General Education Student Learning Outcomes:** Our Commitment to the Liberal Arts in Practice. Through their education both within and outside the major, Hartwick graduates will be able to:
  - Communicate effectively in written English
  - Communication effectively in spoken English
  - Communicate in one non-native language
  - Express relationships in formal logical or mathematical language and interpret relationships so expressed
  - Identify and evaluate the consequences of individual and collective values, beliefs, ideas and actions
  - Develop, test and evaluate hypotheses using appropriate information and methods
  - Produce interpretive or problem-solving creative work
  - Apply knowledge through practical experience

#### **4. Who is responsible for assessing student learning outcomes at Hartwick?**

- Ultimate responsibility for student learning assessment rests with the faculty. For general education learning assessment, the Faculty at large has elected representatives to the Faculty Council and the Committee on Assessment of General Education to provide them with support, guidance, and recommendations in the assessment of student learning. The Faculty Council is ultimately in charge of overseeing the Student Learning Assessment Initiative.
- The Committee on Assessment of General Education (CAGE) (<http://www.hartwick.edu/academics/student-services/academic-affairs/assessment/cage-membership/>) is responsible for development and oversight of the General Education Assessment Plan to assess student learning. CAGE reports results and recommendations for curriculum change to Faculty Council.
- Individual departments and faculty are also responsible for departmental and classroom assessment. Each academic department currently submits a departmental assessment plan and annual assessment report to the Office of Academic Affairs. Classroom assessment is expected; however, how this is achieved is up to the individual faculty member.
- In addition, various offices and units within Academic Affairs and Student Affairs are responsible for assessing out-of-classroom learning through their annual assessment process.

#### **5. Who is responsible for assessing institutional effectiveness outcomes at Hartwick?**

Ultimate responsibility for Institutional Effectiveness lies with the President and the Board. However, each non-academic unit at Hartwick is responsible for planning and carrying out assessment efforts that are intended to monitor and improve the quality of the student experience, stewardship of resources and/or meeting Hartwick's Mission. The Office of the

Dean of Assessment and Retention is responsible for providing resources and support related to creating and carrying out assessment plans each year.

## **6. What timelines and forms do I need to follow/use as part of the formal assessment process at Hartwick?**

- **Timeline:** Currently, the Hartwick assessment cycle runs from August 1<sup>st</sup> - July 31<sup>st</sup>, with assessment reports from the past year and assessment plans for the current year due on August 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.
- **Forms:** Assessment Plans and Reports share a similar template that can be downloaded from the Assessment Form webpage: <http://www.hartwick.edu/academics/student-services/academic-affairs/assessment/assessment-forms/>
  - Additional forms related to assessing experiential learning, FYS and other general education learning outcomes can be found on the Assessment Forms webpage.

## **7. What are the expectations of Middle States in regards to assessment?**

The Middle States Association of Colleges of Higher Education is the accrediting body for Hartwick College. Middle States outlines 7 Standards for Accreditation and 15 Requirements of Affiliation on which they base the accreditation of all colleges and universities within their region. Assessment is embedded in each of the standards, with the expectation that the evidence cited in the standard is based on sound assessment practice. In addition, Standard 5 specifically addresses Educational Effectiveness Assessment and asks for evidence related to student learning outcomes and their relation to Hartwick's mission, defining goals and demonstrating use of assessment data in decision making, support and sustaining a culture of assessment, and periodic review of assessment practices to ensure quality.

## **8. Where can I go to get help or resources related to assessment?**

The Assessment Website (<http://www.hartwick.edu/assessment>) has information, links and on-line tools and resources. In addition, you may contact Kimberly Yousey-Elsener, Dean of Assessment and Retention, at [elsenerk@hartwick.edu](mailto:elsenerk@hartwick.edu), 607-431-4408 or by stopping by the Office of Academic Affairs in Bresee 205.