

Co-Curricular Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Handbook

at

Northwest Arkansas Community College

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Help us improve! This handbook is a living document and a constant work-in-progress. If you have suggestions, please email Co-Curricular_Committee@nwacc.edu.

Handbook Purpose of the Handbook

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC), NorthWest Arkansas Community College's (NWACC) accrediting body, emphasizes learning outcomes assessment. All College assessment efforts fall under the policy "Assessment of Student Learning 3019."

The purpose of this handbook is to assist in the development and implementation of meaningful co-curricular assessment plans. This resource explains the basic concepts and processes of assessment, provides examples and strategies for meeting specific requirements, and offers approaches for making assessment a useful tool in co-curricular programming.

What Is Assessment?

Assessment helps answer some simple questions:

- 1) What is it that we do?
- 2) Why do we do it?
- 3) How well do we do it?
- 4) How do we use what we learn to change and improve?
- 5) Did the changes and improvements create the outcome we desired?

At the end of the day, assessment is about developing clear program goals or outcomes for assessment, measuring how effective we are at achieving these goals/outcomes, and using that data to improve our effectiveness at serving students.

What Is Co-Curricular?

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) defines co-curricular as:

Learning activities, programs and experiences that reinforce the institution's mission and values and complement the formal curriculum. Examples: Study abroad, student-faculty research experiences, service learning, professional clubs or organization, athletics, honor societies, career services, etc. (Core Component 4.B, <https://www.hlcommission.org/Policies/core-component-4-b-what-does-hlc-mean-by-cocurricular.html>)

The College considers formal and college sponsored activities that contribute to the students' educational experiences, such as student government, clubs and organizations, and campus events as co-curricular ("Assessment of Student Learning 3019"). Co-curriculars are college activities, programs, and learning experiences, that have not been identified as "academic" or "operational," and that supports the college's mission, vision, strategic goals, and learning outcomes (all to be encompassed in the term "mission and vision" for the purpose of this document which can be found in appendix A of this document).

In addition to supporting the college mission and vision (see Appendix A), a co-curricular should meet two (2) to three (3) of the following student development or support areas:

Cultural Development – Activities explore and develop competencies either cross culturally or in the fine arts realm. Students gain greater awareness of cultural perspectives.

Intellectual Development – Activities involve reasoning, thinking, relating, and judging. Students develop higher order thinking skills.

Physical Development – Activities usually involve sports, physical activity, movement, or the outdoors.

Psychological Development – Activities support cognitive and/or emotional capabilities and functioning.

Social Development – Activities focus on social and interpersonal skills. These activities encourage and create opportunities for student engagement with peers and/or college personnel.

Academic Support or Academic Related – Activities may provide support for curricular activities, such as tutoring or researching, or be academic-adjacent, but extracurricular in nature, such as a literary magazine or debating. Activities correlate to a general education learning outcome such as writing, reading, oral communication, or one of the stated literacies: mathematical, computer, or information.

The College Catalog notes that co-curricular activities offer enhanced learning opportunities that incorporate three domains: *leadership and teamwork*; *service and social responsibility*; and *integrative and applied learning*. These types of activities help determine if the program is co-curricular. See Appendix B for details and definitions.

Co-Curricular Assessment Plan

All co-curricular programs will submit a Co-Curricular Assessment Plan to the Office of Co-Curricular Assessment. A plan template is provided at the end of this handbook including the assessment activities, outcomes, cycles, methods, and measures.

Co-Curricular Reporting

All co-curricular programs will report the assessment activities their program completed for the previous academic year (July 1 to June 30) by September 30th of each year. For example, a report due September 30th, 2020 will encompass activities completed during the 2019-2020 Academic Year. This information will be submitted to the Co-Curricular Assessment Office. A report template is provided at the end of this handbook.

Co-Curricular Assessment Plan

Plan is due by **October 1st** for the current academic year.

Submit to Co-Curricular_Committee@nwacc.edu.

Plan for Academic Year:	Submitted by:	Submission Date:

Name of Co-Curricular Activity / Program (Examples: SAGA, Math Center)

Assessment Question(s) (What do you want to know?)

College/Department Goal(s) or Co-Curricular Development/Support Area(s) related to Assessment Question (How does this fit into the bigger picture?)

Assessment Methods (How will you know?)

Activities or Measures to be assessed (What one thing are you specifically looking at?)

Data Collection Plan (What are your criteria? What level of performance is acceptable? Are there internal targets or external benchmarks you hope to achieve?)

Data Analysis Plan (How will you review the data you collected? Who is responsible?)

Assessment Results Review (What will you do with what you've learned?)

Discussion and Sharing Plan (For example: with your supervisor, a certain office, Co-Curricular Director, etc.)

Person who will complete the final report and make recommendations for future assessment questions (Who is responsible for completing this cycle?)

A final report will be due by September 30th of the following academic year.

Co-Curricular Assessment Final Report

Report is due **by September 30th** and covers activities assessed in the prior academic year.

Submit to [Co-Curricular Committee@nwacc.edu](mailto:Co-Curricular_Committee@nwacc.edu).

Academic Year Assessed:	Submitted by:	Submission Date:

Name of Co-Curricular Activity / Program

Assessment Question(s)

College/Department Goal(s) or Co-Curricular Development/Support Area(s) related to Assessment Question

Assessment Method

Activities or Measures Assessed (What did you measure?)

Data Collection Method (How did you measure it?)

Data Analysis (What were the results of the measurement?)

Assessment Results Review

Discussion and Sharing (What did you learn? Who discussed the results? Who were results shared with)

Changes or Improvements (What will you do differently or change as a result of what you learned?)

Recommendation(s) for future assessment questions (What do you want to know next?)

Appendix A

NWACC Mission

Empower Lives, Inspire Learning and Strengthen Community, through Accessible, Affordable, Quality Education.

NWACC Vision

Positively changing the lives of those we serve.

NWACC Strategic Goals

1. **Learner Community:** Provide and continuously strengthen quality programs and processes that support student achievement and success.
2. **Taxpayer Community:** Strive to be effective and ethical stewards of taxpayer dollars by maximizing resources and containing costs to allow affordable tuition rates for our students.
3. **College Community:** Provide an open and transparent environment where students, staff, faculty, and alumni feel welcome, safe, valued, connected and informed.
4. **Pre-K through Grade 16 Community:** Develop, expand, and enhance collaborative partnerships with local K-12 and university partners.
5. **Business and the Broader Community:** Enhance partnerships with and provide support to local business, industry, and the general public by offering innovative approaches to curriculum, training and other relevant services.

NWACC Student Learning Outcomes

NWACC is a learning-centered institution. Specific learning outcomes have been established in keeping with the college's mission of providing "learning for living." These outcomes describe the general knowledge, skills, and perspectives faculty and students should expect in earning an associate degree. The following outcomes are listed in the College Catalog:

1. Students develop higher order thinking skills.
2. Students gain greater awareness of cultural perspectives.
3. Students can write clear, coherent, well-organized documents, which are substantially free of errors.
4. Students can read selections at the college level.
5. Students develop effective oral communication skills.
6. Students can achieve mathematical literacy
7. Students can use computers proficiently.
8. Students can employ a variety of sources to locate, evaluate, and use information.

Appendix B

Special program learning outcomes from the College Catalog, 2022-23

NWACC offers specialized curricular and co-curricular programs that offer enhanced learning opportunities. Students who participate in these programs will acquire additional knowledge, skills and perspectives that can greatly add to their success. These programs and activities can positively influence the social, emotional, intellectual, and inter-personal development of students. While each program has its own specific learning outcomes, these outcomes fall under three domains: leadership & teamwork, service & social responsibility, and integrative & applied learning.

LEADERSHIP & TEAMWORK

Students demonstrate the ability to negotiate, manage conflict, communicate, and lead others as they work in teams, collaborate and solve problems. Leadership programs, the student newspaper, student clubs and organizations are examples of programs that contribute to this domain.

SERVICE & SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Students acquire knowledge and demonstrate their ability to address significant public problems and questions. Their learning is focused on addressing community needs and improving public welfare. Students gain a greater understanding and appreciation of diversity and civic engagement. Service learning projects, student group community service initiatives, and study abroad are examples of activities that contribute to this domain.

INTEGRATIVE & APPLIED LEARNING

Students demonstrate their ability to integrate and apply their learning to new settings and complex problems. Research projects, practicums, internships, performances, and creative tasks contribute to this domain.