



Institutional Framework for Continuous Improvement in Academic Affairs

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Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey is committed to continuous improvement in academic affairs to link periodic assessment to the broader strategic goals of the academic unit, campus, and/or university and to evaluate the budgetary resources necessary to achieve such goals. The university engages in multiple assessment efforts to promote continuous improvement.¹

To build upon these efforts, each chancellor-led unit (CLU) shall develop a procedure or policy that articulates the manner in which a regularized assessment process, with the goal of continuous improvement, is instituted within the CLU. Such procedures or policies are subject to approval by the executive vice president for academic affairs to ensure they are consistent with the guidelines outlined below. The intent of CLU-specific procedures or policies is to ensure that each CLU has sufficient latitude to define a continuous improvement process appropriate to its mission and to document evidence of assessment and continuous improvement to the Middle State Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE).

In developing CLU-specific policies, chancellors should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Reviews or assessments should be focused on academic units (schools/departments) or academic programs (degrees/certificates), as determined by each CLU. Reviews may also be thematic in scope (i.e., cluster reviews) to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of cross-cutting areas (e.g., climate science, etc.).
 - Reviews by professional/specialized accreditors may serve as an acceptable form of review, if deemed appropriate by the chancellor. However, best practice is for such reviews to occur in advance of an accreditation review.
- Reviews should be periodic (i.e., on a regularized cycle) and supplemented, as appropriate.
 - Prior to the beginning of each academic year, CLUs will submit a list of scheduled reviews to the executive vice president for academic affairs. At the conclusion of each academic year, CLUs will submit a list of completed reviews and provide access to the resulting reports.
 - However, reviews may be initiated at any time by the president, executive vice president for academic affairs, chancellor/provost, or deans. Examples of when an ad-hoc review may be initiated include:
 - Demonstrated cause for concern with respect to performance indicators, such as declines in enrollment, graduation rates, or reputational standing.

¹ Examples include (1) periodic review of the institution and select academic units through [institutional accreditation](#) and [specialized accreditation](#), (2) ad-hoc reviews, such as those coordinated by the Office of University Strategy (OUS) and the [Committee on Academic Planning](#), (3) leadership reviews, including the [Process for the Evaluation of Chancellors](#) and the [Process for the Evaluation of Academic Deans](#), (4) reviews of centers and institutes ([Policy 10.1.5](#)), and (5) regularized [assessment](#) of student learning outcomes (SLOs) and student support services through the Assessment Council on Learning Outcomes (ACLO) and the Assessment Council on the Student Experience (ACSE).



- A pending change in decanal leadership, which would subsequently inform the search process.
- When academic leadership believes a particular area represents a strategic strength, weakness, opportunity, or threat requiring an ad-hoc review.
- Reviews should:
 - Incorporate an internal assessment (i.e., self-study) of the academic unit or academic program that documents linkages with unit, CLU, and institutional priorities.
 - At the discretion of the chancellor, provost, or dean, incorporate an external assessment (i.e., peer reviewers) of the academic unit or academic program.
 - Incorporate a suite of metrics, of relevance to academic leadership, to inform both the internal and external assessment.
 - Be forward looking and evaluative, not just descriptive, to ensure a focus on continuous improvement.
 - Incorporate recommendations and an implementation plan to enact such recommendations.
 - Incorporate a status report, at a pre-defined interval, that documents progress on recommendations resulting from the review.
 - Share the results of reviews with the university, along with implemented changes, to construct a repository of reviews for use during the reaffirmation of accreditation with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE).