

# Assessment Plan

Academic and Student Affairs

*Updated Summer 2020*



**DMACC**  
DES MOINES AREA  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## Table of Contents

Overview of DMACC Assessment Plan .....	3
Assessment Plan Timeline .....	4
Academic Assessment .....	5
Student Affairs Assessment .....	9
Conclusion .....	12
Appendix A: DMACC's Collegewide Outcomes .....	13
Appendix B: About the DMACC Assessment Commission .....	14
Appendix C: The 5-Year Plan for Assessed Courses .....	15
Appendix D: Assessment Links and Resources .....	16

## Overview of DMACC Assessment Plan

Assessment means “evaluating performance” and is perhaps the most fundamental activity of education. The overall purpose of assessment is to improve student learning and development. Effective assessment provides feedback for students, instructors, and staff to facilitate continuous improvement.

“Assessment” also refers to the process of reporting evidence of student learning to accrediting bodies. This second definition of assessment is merely an extension of the first. Done correctly, assessment captures the ongoing work of an institution engaged in continuous improvement.

### Academic and Student Affairs Assessment

This document addresses the following two areas of assessment:

- **Academic Assessment**, which includes curricular and co-curricular student learning (see pages 5-8)
- **Student Affairs Assessment**, which includes student development outcomes related to student services departments and programs (see pages 9-10)

These areas share a common set of goals, the DMACC Collegewide Outcomes (**See Appendix A**). Additionally, representatives from both areas serve on the DMACC Assessment Commission (**see Appendix B**) and the Student Affairs Advisory Council.

Finally, DMACC recognizes the interconnected nature of the formal academic curriculum and the support services offered by Student Affairs. While these two approaches to assessment are complementary, they require different methodologies and practices. In the following pages, the ongoing processes of Academic Assessment and Student Affairs Assessment at DMACC are discussed.

## Assessment Plan Timeline

**August, 2017:** Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) creates the DMACC Assessment Commission

**March, 2018:** All departments and programs submit 5-year plans for assessing their courses

**June 2018:** DMACC's revised Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) approved by the VPAA, Deans and Provosts, and Assessment Commission

**August, 2018:** Assessment of 5-year plan courses begins

**January, 2019:** Direct assessment of ELOs begins

**August, 2019:** VPAA announces plan to collect all assessment data through Blackboard by August 2020

**October 2019:** Vice President of Enrollment Services and Student Success announces Student Affairs Assessment initiatives

**January 2020:** Begin work on first CAS-designed self-assessment guide for Orientation programs

**February/March 2020:** Assessment Commission and Vice Presidents of Enrollment Services/Student Success and Academic Affairs approve Collegewide Outcomes, including existing Essential Learning Outcomes and newly defined Essential Development Outcomes

**Spring 2020:** Distribution and beginning work on additional CAS-designed self-assessment guides (Advising, Career Services, Alcohol and Other Drug Programs, and Sexual Violence-Related Programs)

**Fall 2020:** Full implementation of Blackboard for assessment data begins; CAS-designed self-assessment continues.

**May 2021:** First cycle of Essential Learning Outcomes Assessment complete

**March 2023:** 2023-2028 5-Year Plan approved by Assessment Commission

**May 2023:** Second cycle of Essential Learning Outcomes Assessment complete

## Academic Assessment

Academic Assessment at DMACC is organized around 10 words: Set goals. Collect evidence. Use best practices. Close the loop. DMACC's Assessment Plan addresses these four areas:

- **Set Goals:** What do we want our students to learn?
- **Collect Evidence:** What have our students learned?
- **Use Best Practices:** Are we applying proven methods of assessment?
- **Close the Loop:** Are we using results to improve curriculum and instruction?

### Set Goals

- **Student learning goals:** Assessment will focus on measurable course and program competencies, along with DMACC's Collegewide Outcomes.
- **Co-curricular goals:** DMACC clubs and organization connected to curricular learning are assessed using the Collegewide Outcomes.
- **Bloom's Taxonomy:** DMACC curriculum is designed with measurable verbs based on Bloom's Taxonomy.
- **5-year plan:** All programs will follow a schedule of assessment beginning in Fall of 2018 and continuing through Summer of 2023 (**See Appendix C**). This plan will be renewed for an additional 5-years effective Fall 2023.
- **Course and Discipline Participation goals:** Each semester, 20% of courses and 50% of disciplines offered at DMACC will participate in assessment. These metrics are connected to DMACC's Strategic Plan.

### Collect Evidence

Data and artifacts related to student learning goals are collected each semester. Beginning in Fall 2020, a Blackboard EAC data report will be generated for all courses participating in assessment. Student goals will be measured on the following levels:

- **College Level:** DMACC's Collegewide Outcomes
- **Program Level:** Programs with AAS degrees, certificates, and diplomas feature program competencies.
- **Course Level:** All DMACC courses feature course competencies. It is not possible, nor desirable, to assess all outcomes associated with a course within a single assessment. Departments design assessments that capture key aspects of student learning important to the course.

## Use Best Practices

Current scholarship guides assessment practices, including the following areas: embedded assessment, rubrics, and curriculum mapping.

**Embedded Assessment:** In her book, *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*<sup>1</sup>, Linda Suskie argues that embedded assessments, defined as assignments built into the regular coursework, are more likely to improve teaching and learning than external or “ad-on” assessments. She writes that embedded assessments are a better match for local learning goals and are likely to elicit better participation and effort from students. Certainly, nationally vetted instruments and exams are important for many disciplines and can be a required component for externally accredited programs. Embedded assessment can serve as a necessary complement to external assessment, as well as provide information on institutional and course goals concurrently.

**Rubrics:** Empirical research on the positive impact of rubrics on student learning is found in Brookhart (2018)<sup>2</sup>, Dawson (2017)<sup>3</sup>, and Ragupathi & Lee (2020)<sup>4</sup> and addressed in case studies and reports published by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and the National Institute of Learning Outcomes Assessment, two organizations the DMACC Assessment Commission relies on for research and best practices. The use of standard rubrics further promotes the goal of bringing coherence to assessment. As Brookhart (2018) writes, “The prevailing hypothesis about how rubrics help students is that they make explicit both the expectations for student work and more generally, describe what learning looks like.” Used properly, rubrics improve communication and improve feedback.

**Curriculum Mapping:** One concrete way to bring meaningfulness to assessment is through curriculum mapping. The purpose of curriculum mapping is to align classroom learning goals with assignments and the learning outcomes established for

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<sup>1</sup> Suskie, L. (2018). *Assessing student learning: A common sense guide*. John Wiley & Sons.

<sup>2</sup> Brookhart, S. M. (2018, April). Appropriate criteria: key to effective rubrics. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 3, p. 22). *Frontiers*.

<sup>3</sup> Dawson, P. (2017). Assessment rubrics: towards clearer and more replicable design, research and practice. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 42(3), 347-360.

<sup>4</sup> Ragupathi, K., & Lee, A. (2020). Beyond Fairness and Consistency in Grading: The Role of Rubrics in Higher Education. In *Diversity and Inclusion in Global Higher Education* (pp. 73-95). Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore.

departmental and institutional assessment (Veltri & Webb, 2019)<sup>5</sup>. The process of curriculum mapping requires faculty to collaborate on a common vision, share common assessments, and to create a clear map of how course-level work supports program and college level outcomes. A curriculum map is a communication tool and a shared plan for the direction of a department and college. Curriculum maps provide a sequence of learning experiences for students and bring coherence to the academic mission

## Close the Loop

The academic assessment plan at DMACC emphasizes using assessment data in following contexts:

- **Reviewing Results:** Each semester, departments review assessment data. Beginning in Fall 2020, all data reports will be generated with Blackboard EAC. The Assessment Commission supports faculty with data interpretation and analysis. Faculty departments are encouraged to use scheduled meeting time and college development days for assessment conversations. The Assessment Commission posts all EAC data to Blackboard Community before the start of each semester to accommodate department meeting times.
- **Making Improvements:** Faculty chairs submit regular narrative reports explaining how data will be used to make improvements. The narrative form asks a series of questions related to the details of the assessment project, the results, and how the assessment will impact changes to curriculum and instruction. Chairs are asked to discuss assessment results with faculty prior to completing the narrative. The Assessment Commission reviews all narratives and makes them available for administrative review and documentation in 5-year program evaluations
- **Professional Development:** The Assessment Commission offers regular professional development related to assessment best practices and in conjunction with the Teaching and Learning Center and Distance Learning. Assessment related presentations and trainings are offered during faculty development days, department meetings, new faculty orientation, faculty mentor

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<sup>5</sup> Veltri, N. F., Webb, H. W., Matveev, A. G., & Zapatero, E. G. (2019). Curriculum mapping as a tool for continuous improvement of IS curriculum. *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 22(1), 4.

program sessions, concurrent enrollment development sessions, and DMACC-affiliated conferences, including M.E.S.H. and the Summer Institute. The Assessment Commission also uses Blackboard Community to provide recordings of training sessions as well as resources and materials.

- **Faculty Engagement:** Faculty involvement is vital to the mission of assessment. In order to bring meaningfulness and a sustained commitment to the project of assessment, it is important to have faculty leadership driving the work of the Assessment Commission. McKenzie and Locke (2010)<sup>6</sup> argue that only “instructional leadership” can transform students and institutions on the issue that matters most: “the core business of teaching and learning” (p. 664). They believe that when “leaders promote and participate in teacher learning and development, there is a strong effect on student learning” (p. 664). The following questions must be answered: What should our students be learning in order to be prepared for 21<sup>st</sup> century work? How can we best engage students in this work and make it meaningful and relevant? What are the best types of assessments for capturing student success relative to these vital skills? How do we improve learning in order to improve the lives of students? Answering these questions requires instructional leadership and a focus on the student classroom experience.

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<sup>6</sup> McKenzie, K.B. & Locke, L.A. (2010). Chapter 3: On becoming a leader for educational equity and excellence: It starts with instruction. In S.D. Horsford (Ed.), *New perspectives in educational leadership: Exploring social, political, and community contexts and meaning* (pp. 47-65). New York: Peter Lang.



## Student Affairs Assessment

In Fall 2019, DMACC began developing a strategy to formally assess student learning, development, and success in our Student Affairs departments. The college has been engaged in classroom assessment with Essential Learning Outcomes, and the student affairs units have added Essential Development Outcomes to create the DMACC Collegewide Outcomes.

Much of our approach will be guided by The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) (**See Appendix D**), and many of our measurements will be determined by departments, campuses and centers, student services programs, and other groups as they consider what they hope to teach students as part of their work.

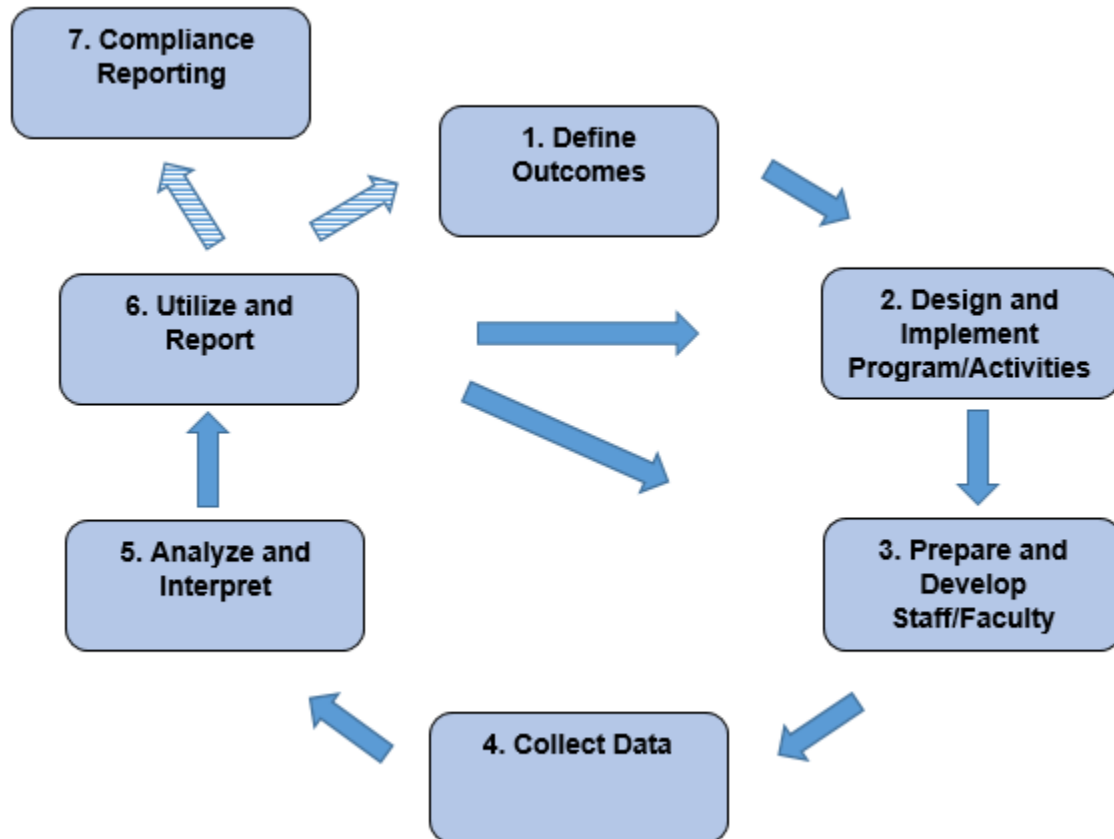
In November of 2019, an advisory council was created to provide high-level oversight of the development and implementation of Student Affairs Assessment at the college. This advisory council serves as a guiding resource and provides input and recommendations at decision-making points of the implementation process.

As the Student Affairs Assessment initiative was recently implemented in late 2019, this document provides an overview of the implementation progress and plan. Implementing student affairs assessment comprehensively throughout the district will be a significant project, and the undertaking will require a great deal of time and effort. A proposed process for implementation as well as steps taken so far is included in this document.

The implementation of student affairs assessment will dually focus on students and programs. First, the development of the assessment strategy will focus on the student outcomes our programs should support. These student outcomes are called Essential Development Outcomes, and they include Personal Development, Interpersonal Competence, Humanitarianism and Civic Engagement, and Practical Competence. We will also focus on reviewing existing functional unit goals and outcomes or assisting with creating strategic goals and outcomes where they may not currently exist.

## Cycle of Assessment

The implementation and maintenance of student affairs assessment will operate on a cycle of assessment that follows a revised version of Maki's cycle of assessment.



Compliance reporting has a hashed arrow because it does not necessarily influence the cycle of assessment. A hashed arrow is used between “Utilize and Report” and “Defining Outcomes” because it is not often the outcomes will need to change or be revised, but instead the programs, courses, or activities that were designed to help meet the outcomes.

## **Student Affairs Assessment: Next Steps**

### **Student Outcomes**

Essential Development Outcomes (EDOs) have been defined and approved, and they are now ready for implementation and assessment. At this time, the college has recently received the results of a technology audit and is reviewing its technological resources. Conversations are underway regarding whether new technology solutions are going to be purchased or integrated. Determining what, if any, software will be implemented will play a significant factor in determining how EDOs evidence is collected.

A formal evidence collection and evaluation plan will not be implemented until the college determines what, if any, technological solution will be purchased. In the meantime, we will begin to identify and implement evidence collection opportunities that exist in current practices.

We will first target accessible evidence collection opportunities such as orientation and our first-semester student development course, SDV108: The College Experience. As other opportunities are discovered, additional data collection practices will be implemented.

### **Department, Program, and Activity Outcomes**

CAS self-assessment guides (SAGs) will be executed with departments and programs on a rolling basis to help these functional units define their own goals, outcomes, and assessment methods. The SAGs are large, comprehensive documents that require a great deal of time to complete and even longer to act on. The Student Affairs Assessment effort will continue to support progress in this area. To date, the orientation department was the first to complete and begin implementing the recommendations from the SAG. Departments or programs who are in the process of completing SAGs are Advising, Career Services, Alcohol and Other Drug Programs, and Sexual Violence-Related Programs.

Now that the college has Essential Learning Outcomes and Essential Development Outcomes, SAG facilitators can use those to aid functional units in the identification of student learning and development goals in their areas.

## Conclusion

DMACC has established clear goals for student learning and development within the academic and student affairs departments. The purpose of assessment is to measure student progress toward these goals and to use the results to improve curriculum and instruction.

Today's employers demand a range of complex abilities, including discipline knowledge, problem solving, teamwork, and communication skills. Assessment is one tool that can determine whether DMACC students are learning these skills in preparation for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century working environment. In short, assessment is for our students.

## Appendix A

### DMACC Collegewide Outcomes

#### Essential Learning Outcomes

**Outcome 1: Discipline Knowledge:** Students will be able to understand and apply discipline knowledge foundational to study within a single course or an entire program.

**Outcome 2: Critical Thinking:** Students will be able to analyze complex information, support arguments with credible evidence, and reach well-reasoned conclusions.

**Outcome 3: Communication Skills:** Students will be able to communicate clearly and effectively within the appropriate context.

**Outcome 4: Problem-Solving:** Students will be able to define, identify, and analyze problems before applying a successful solution.

**Outcome 5: Collaboration:** Students will be able to apply the skills and attitudes necessary for effective teamwork, including interpersonal communication, project management, and leadership.

#### Essential Development Outcomes

**Outcome 6: Personal Development:** Students will understand and develop an integrated personal identity, sense of self, and code of ethics and values.

**Outcome 7: Interpersonal Competence:** Students will engage in positive group interactions and relationships as well as demonstrate an understanding of leadership principles.

**Outcome 8: Humanitarianism and Civic Engagement:** Students will demonstrate a commitment to supporting community, global, and social responsibilities that create safe, equitable, and thriving environments.

**Outcome 9: Practical Competence:** Students will understand and perform cognitive and practical skills that will enable healthy, productive, and purposeful lives.

## **Appendix B**

### **About the DMAACC Assessment Commission**

The Des Moines Area Community College (DMAACC) Assessment Commission, formed in August of 2017, is a faculty-led team responsible for promoting best practices, providing meaningful reports on student learning outcomes, and recommending improvements to curriculum and instruction. The Commission strives to support assessment and accreditation districtwide with an emphasis on teaching and learning. Featuring faculty and administrators from multiple campuses, the Commission represents Arts and Sciences, Career and Technical Education, Career Advantage, Academic Affairs, and Institutional Effectiveness.

#### **Commission Charge**

The Assessment Commission serves DMAACC students, faculty, staff, and administration through support of college, department, program and course-level assessments. With the goal of continuous improvement, the Assessment Commission will focus on research-based approaches to pedagogy and standardized practices for administering assessment and reporting results.

#### **Guiding Principles**

1. The primary purpose of assessment is to support teaching and learning.
2. Assessment is learner-centered and faculty-driven.
3. Each department and program will engage in district-wide collaboration and communication regarding assessment procedures.
4. Assessment reporting will be meaningful and consistent.
5. The assessment process will respect student and faculty privacy and will not be used for faculty evaluation or comparative judgments of departments or programs.
6. DMAACC will support assessment with up-to-date technology.

## Appendix C

### The 5-Year Plan for Assessed Courses

The 5-year plan ensures on-going assessment to support DMACC's Strategic Plan goal of assessing 20% of courses and 50% of disciplines offered each semester.

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>#Courses on the 5-year plan</b>	<b>% of Courses Offered*</b>
2018-2019	336	29%
2019-2020	354	31%
2020-2021	351	30%
2021-2022	328	28%
2022-2023	313	27%

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>#Disciplines on the 5-year plan</b>	<b>% of Disciplines Offered*</b>
2018-2019	83	75%
2019-2020	90	82%
2020-2021	85	77%
2021-2022	76	69%
2022-2023	81	74%

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Scheduled for ELO Assessment</b>
2018-2019	ELO 2, ELO 3
2019-2020	ELO 1, ELO 2, ELO 3, ELO 4
2020-2021	ELO 1, ELO 2, ELO 3, ELO 4, ELO 5
2021-2022	ELO 1, ELO 2, ELO 3, ELO 4, ELO 5
2022-2023	ELO 1, ELO 2, ELO 3, ELO 4, ELO 5

\*Percentages are projected; scheduled courses are subject to change based on enrollment, program changes, and staffing.

## Appendix D

### Assessment Links and Resources

Primary Assessment Contacts:

- **Academic Assessment:** Andrew Neuendorf, Director of Assessment, [ajneuendorf@dmacc.edu](mailto:ajneuendorf@dmacc.edu)
- **Student Affairs Assessment:** Erica Spiller, Assistant Director, Student Development, [elspiller@dmacc.edu](mailto:elspiller@dmacc.edu)
- The DMACC Assessment Commission webpage: <https://dmacc.edu/oie/Pages/assessment.aspx>

DMACC Faculty can access information about assessment in the following places:

- The Teaching and Learning Blackboard Community under “Assessment”
- Your Discipline’s Blackboard Community under “Assessment”
- Contact district Chairs, program chairs, group leaders, deans, and provosts

Additional resources:

- DMACC Catalog, including course and program competencies: <https://catalog.dmacc.edu/index.php?catoid=17>
- Higher Learning Commission Criteria for Accreditation: <https://www.hlcommission.org/Policies/criteria-and-core-components.html>
- The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment: <https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/>
- The Association of American Colleges and Universities: <https://www.aacu.org/>
- The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS): <http://standards.cas.edu/getpdf.cfm?PDF=D87A29DC-D1D6-D014-83AA8667902C480B>
- DMACC Strategic Plan: <https://www.dmacc.edu/oie/Pages/strategicplan2017.aspx>