

Office of Academic Planning and Assessment

Best Practices for Documenting Assessment of Online and Distance Education Programs

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Office of Academic Planning and Assessment

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The element descriptions should provide clear details regarding what the measures were, how they were developed, how they were utilized, and the expected levels of success. The descriptions should also clarify whether the Indicators and Criterion relate to face-to-face students, online students, or both. As with the Goals and Objectives, the instruments used to assess student attainment of the desired learning objectives, as well as the program's expected levels of success for those students, should be clear to an outside observer. This is particularly important for hybrid programs.

Third, assessment results from all sample groups should be reported by programs within the Findings element of the OATDB. **When demonstrating the effectiveness of hybrid programs, it is considered best practice to compare the results from face-to-face and distance education students for all shared learning objectives. The purpose is to ensure that both groups are demonstrating similar levels of attainment of the desired learning objectives. There is not an expectation that both groups' results be identical; however, there is an expectation they be similar. If significant variations between the two groups are identified, then reasons for these variations must be documented and plans of action provided for addressing the gaps.** The easiest way for programs to demonstrate equitable attainment will be to disaggregate the assessment results for both online and face-to-face students within the Finding descriptions in a way that is clear to an outside observer.

Finally, it is important that programs clearly demonstrate how Findings are used to improve upon the educational experience for all students within the program, regardless of delivery method, and not just one group to the exclusion of the other. These Actions should be driven by the Findings for both distance education and face-to-face students. Areas for improvement found within one or both groups should be addressed within both the program's Actions and Plan for Continuous Improvement. As with the other elements, it is important that the connection between Findings, Actions, and Plan for Continuous Improvement be clear to an outside observer.