# Assessment Quarterly

## FOURTH EDITION

The Assessment Quarterly is a quarterly look at how assessment integrates into the St. Philip's College culture to create a holistic approach to supporting student learning at all levels. The Assessment Quarterly focuses on the language of assessment, key concepts in assessing student and programmatic outcomes, and ideas for sharing with faculty and staff to improve the overall student experience. Future Assessment Quarterlies will focus on signpost/signature assignments, how to establish Assessment Work Groups, and using indirect assessment measures.

## SEPTEMBER 2022 QUARTERLY FOCUS

In the September 2022 edition, the focus is on documentation and seeking improvement for continuous compliance.
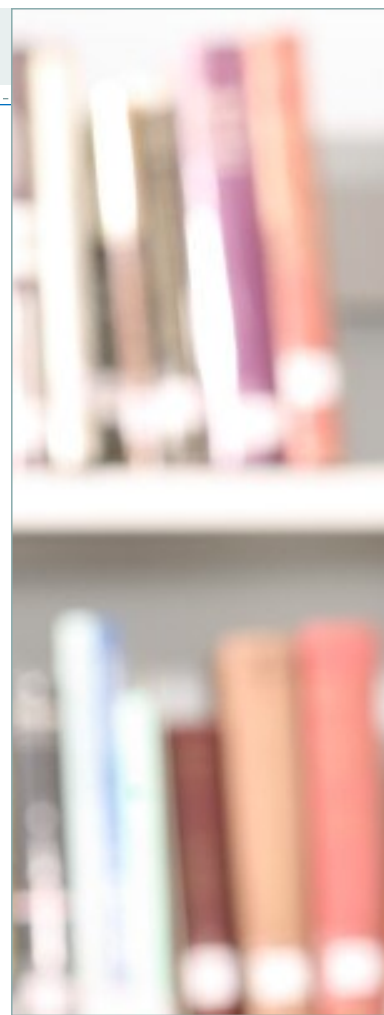
### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Focus on improvement
- Results and Action Plans

# KEY TERMS IN ASSESSMENT

New to assessment? Each month we will feature key terms in assessment to help you learn the common vocabulary used in assessment.

**Benchmarks** describe the standard or point of reference against which things may be compared or assessed.

**Criteria** provide guidelines, rules, characteristics, or dimensions that are used to judge the quality of student performance. They may be holistic, analytic, general, or specific.

**Target** describes the percentage of student work that will meet the performance standard for a given learning outcome; also a quantitative value that indicates an appropriate level of success has been attained.

*Definitions attributed to Oxford Languages, System for Adult Basic Education Support, 2008, and UC Davis Assessment*

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## "The biggest room in the world is the room for improvement."
### *Helmut Schmidt*

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**FRAMEWORK FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

**FIND**

**ORGANIZE**

**CLARIFY**

**UNDERSTAND**

**SELECT**

**PLAN**

**DO**

**CHECK**

**ACT**

SPC adopted FOCUS PDCA for work process improvement; these efforts allow process owners and managers to understand performance of their processes and design improvements and innovations as opportunities arise.

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# CYCLE FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Define/revise Objectives and Outcomes

Identify/revise Measures and Methods

Select/revise Criteria and Targets

Gather Results and Findings

Evaluate/Analyze Results

Document Evidence of Improvement

Develop Action Plan for Continuous Improvement

Document all steps for compliance

## ESTABLISHING BENCHMARKS AND TARGETS

### Benchmarks and targets should be:

- Measurable
- Unambiguous
- Specific

### Setting benchmarks and targets:

- Determine what will be measured by identifying key performance indicators (KPIs)
- Research industry-specific competitors to identify top performers
- Develop informed expectations
- Communicate targets
- Measure progress and analyze results to improve

## 5 STEP CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CYCLE

1. **DEFINE WHAT WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED (OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES).**

2. **IDENTIFY PROCESS AND TOOLS FOR ASSESSMENT (MEASURES AND METHODS).**

3. **SELECT THE GUIDELINES AND DEVELOP PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS (CRITERIA AND TARGETS).**

4. **GATHER DATA AND EVIDENCE (RESULTS AND FINDINGS).**

5. **EVALUATE THE RESULTS AND DETERMINE WHAT IMPROVEMENT HAS OCCURRED AND WHAT ACTIONS ARE NEEDED FOR ADDITIONAL IMPROVEMENT (GAP ANALYSIS AND ACTION PLAN).**

SACSCOC 8.2.

THE INSTITUTION IDENTIFIES EXPECTED OUTCOMES, ASSESSES THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT ACHIEVES THESE OUTCOMES, AND **PROVIDES EVIDENCE OF SEEKING IMPROVEMENT BASED ON ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS** IN THE AREAS BELOW:

a. Student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs. (Student outcomes: educational programs)

b. Student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs. (Student outcomes: general education)

c. Academic and student services that support student success. (Student outcomes: academic and student services)

Please use the following link to see more:
SACSCOC Tips

# CHARACTERISTICS OF CRITERIA

Criteria should:

- Align to the specific outcome and associated measure/method

- Clarify expectations

- Describe the indicators that will represent successful outcome attainment

- Possess a clear and accurate relationship to subsequent results

- Scoring rubrics are based on criteria and define what the criteria mean and how they are used.

# SPOTLIGHT ON RESULTS

- Results are provided for each assessment method and target

- Results include discussion of findings developed through the associated measure/method

- Results are based on reliable and valid data collection methods

- Results focus on student accomplishments and success

- Results address achievement of the outcome and performance target

- Results provide indicators for improvement and guide action plans

# ESTABLISHING ACTION PLANS

- Action plans focus on strategic and meaningful improvement of student learning and unit performance

- Action plans are guided by review and analysis of findings and results

- Actions plans should/will lead to continuous improvement of the program or unit

- Plans are realistic based on time and resources available

## REPORTING EVIDENCE OF IMPROVEMENT

Compliance requires evidence. This evidence should be based on results collected and documented through deliberate assessment and should include trend data, analysis, and action plans. Ideally three year trends will be recorded.

For student learning outcomes, this evidence should address how student learning has improved based on strategies deployed. These strategies may include revising curriculum or instruction.

*Outlines and resources for reporting evidence are provided through the Canvas course: SPC Program Assessment.
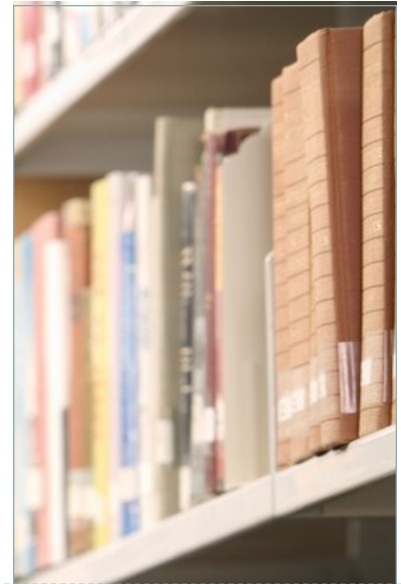
"Numbers never lie, after all: they simply tell different stories depending on the math of the tellers." Luis Alberto Urrea

## A NOTE ON MINIMUM THRESHOLDS

SACSCOC defines "thresholds of acceptability" in its interpretation of Core Requirement 8.1: the thresholds of acceptability are the minimal expectations set by the institution to define its own acceptable level of achievement (i.e., a minimum target).

For clarity, SPC's Student Achievement Goals adopts the term minimum threshold, rather than threshold of acceptability.

Unlike benchmarks and targets, which may be aspirational, this minimum threshold defines the lowest level of acceptable performance.
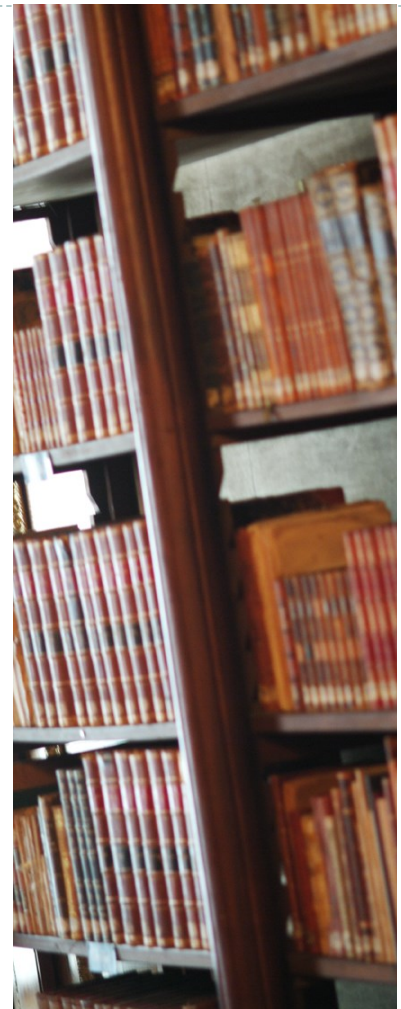
## LOOKING AHEAD

Our next Assessment Quarterly will discuss seeking improvement, including documentation and evidence of the process, strategies employed, and results gathered.