Student Learning Assessment in Virginia Higher Education

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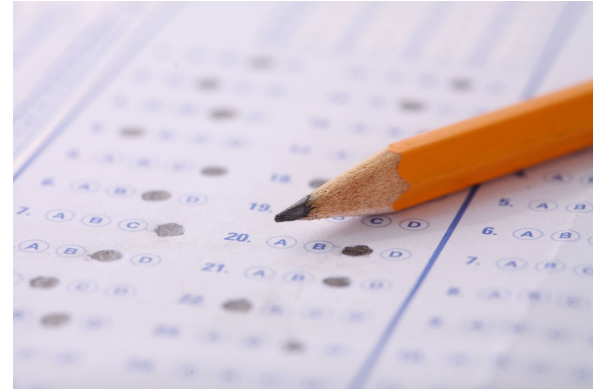STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA

Code of Virginia § 23.1-203

"[The Council shall...] in cooperation with public institutions of higher education, develop guidelines for the assessment of student achievement. Each such institution shall use an approved program that complies with the guidelines of the Council and is consistent with the institution's mission and educational objectives in the development of such assessment. The Council shall report each institution's assessment of student achievement in the revisions to the Commonwealth's statewide strategic plan for higher education."

What do we mean by assessment?

Assessment is deciding what we want our students to learn and making sure they learn it.

~ Linda Suskie

Suskie, L. (2018). *Assessing student learning: A common sense guide* (3rd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

A brief history of assessment

Accountability
(1980s-2000s)

Improvement
(2000s-present)

Dueling philosophies

Accountability

- Externally motivated

- Compliance-focused

- Standardized testing

- Incentivizes "looking good"

- Faculty are often disengaged

Improvement

- Internally motivated

- Teaching/Learning-focused

- "Authentic" assessments

- Incentivizes getting better

- Faculty are key partners

SCHEV's approach

- Balance a common vision with institutional autonomy
- Align with accreditation standards
- Promote awareness of institutional effectiveness
- Create a framework for sharing among institutions

Assessment should be meaningful and manageable.

Policy overview

A college education in Virginia—regardless of major or specialized field of study—ideally should emphasize:

- Broad learning
- Intellectual and practical skills
- Integrative and adaptive learning
- Personal and social responsibility

Assess student achievement in at least 6 areas (primarily using direct methods):

- Critical thinking
- Written communication
- Quantitative reasoning
- Civic engagement
- Institution-specific competencies (2 or more)

Reporting & sharing

- Public reports

- Peer-to-peer feedback

  Spotlight series:
  February 2022

https://spark.adobe.com/page/qUa3sKSo4gpZu/

Civic engagement

- Why assess civic engagement?

- Individual institutional efforts

- Grassroots networks support sharing across institutions

- Virginia is regarded as a leader nationally

Civic Learning & Democracy Engagement (CLDE) Initiative

- www.collegeciviclearning.org

- AAC&U, SHEEO, CCA & College Promise, plus 50+ partner organizations

- Goals:
  - Quality & Equity
    Make CLDE an expectation for all students
  - Democracy Engagement
    Strengthen democracy in the U.S. and around the world
  - Collaborative Problem Solving
    Prepare students to address public problems
  - Policy Support
    Advocate for policies and resources that support CLDE