**University of Maryland, Baltimore**

**Assessment Plan Template**

The University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB), in its efforts to ensure continuous improvement in all aspects of the conduct of its mission, provides the following template to assess student learning outcomes at the program level to comply with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) standards for accreditation, while also establishing a program for continuous institutional assessment.

Specifically, this template relates to the MSCHE Standard III - Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience, and reads as follows below:

***“An institution provides students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence at all program, certificate, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality. All learning experiences, regardless of modality, program pace/schedule, level, and setting are consistent with higher education expectations.”***

Elements of the MSCHE Standard V: Educational Assessment Effectiveness - specifically, Criteria #3 – the consideration and use of assessment results for the improvement of educational effectiveness – pairs with Standard III and, therefore, such tracking element is also contained in this assessment template.

Each assessment plan should contain the following elements:

* Program Mission Statement
* Program Description
* Program Objectives
* Student Learning Outcomes (anticipated and tracked)
* Methods of Assessment (Direct and Indirect and stated in qualitative or quantitative terms)
* Timeframe for Data Collection and Analysis
* Use of Assessment Data for Continuous Program Improvement

1. **Mission Statement**: The mission statement should concisely state the name and purpose of the program.
2. **Program Description**: The plan should include a 1-2 paragraph description of the program, highlighting the focus of the program, how and where it is delivered, its intended market, whether it is professionally accredited, and other unique aspects of the program that would be important for assessment.
3. **Program Objectives**: The plan should provide the program’s objectives as specific statements indicating what the program wants to accomplish, and these statements should connect to the mission statement.
4. **Student Learning Outcomes**: Student learning outcomes (SLOs) are the accumulated knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students develop during a course of study in the program. Essentially, SLOs tell us what students will learn in the program. SLOs should not be confused with program objectives, which are focused on what the program will accomplish. SLOs should be written as specific, measureable statements describing *what students will be able to do* upon completion of the program. Each SLO should contain an ***action verb*** and a learning statement. For example, upon completion of the PhD in XX, students will be able to ***analyze and evaluate*** the literature relevant to their area of study.
5. Methods of Assessment: Every assessment plan needs evidence to demonstrate student learning at the program level. This evidence can be in the form of a direct measure of student learning or an indirect measure of student learning. **In addition, describe the assessment methodology in quantitative or qualitative terms.**

* **Direct measures** include data that show specific student progress in achieving the student learning outcomes (SLOs) set by the program. For professional and graduate programs, direct measures may include a preliminary or qualifying examination, a capstone or research project, a final examination (oral and written), a thesis or dissertation, manuscripts and published articles by the student, and other papers, reports, examinations and presentations that demonstrate mastery of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that a student is expected to learn in the program.
* **Indirect measures** include information related to the student’s learning, such as a cumulative GPA, course evaluations, annual reviews about the student’s progress, the results of a satisfaction or exit survey, focus group feedback, and student placement data.
* **Qualitative vs. quantitative evidence**. Qualitative evidence is descriptive and is generally more difficult to measure as it uses non-numerical data to arrive at meaning through social interaction. In contrast, quantitative data is information that can be measured using numbers.

Both direct and indirect assessment data should be associated with the program’s student learning outcomes and collected within a timeframe determined by the program.

1. **Timeframe for Collecting and Analyzing Data**: Ideally, assessment data should be collected throughout the year on an annual basis; for example, preliminary examination, final examination, and dissertation results can be collected at the end of each semester in which these activities take place. At the minimum, program faculty should schedule an annual meeting to review these data and discuss student progress toward the SLOs.
2. **Use of Assessment Data**: The program should identify who will receive the analyzed assessment data, and how it will be used by the program. For example, will data be shared with all program faculty for mentoring purposes, the program’s curriculum committee for curricular changes and development, or the instructional faculty for course feedback? Program changes and improvements should be recommended as needed in response to the analysis of assessment data. Such activities should be documented and reported in an assessment report (preferably, annually) as requested by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Strategic Planning, and Assessment (IESPA).

**SAMPLE ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR THE MASTER IN GENETIC COUNSELING**

**Mission:** The mission of the Master of Science in Genetic Counseling is to prepare students for advanced careers as professionals, practitioners, and educators in the field of Genetic Counseling. The program will produce critical and creative thinkers who are capable of working collaboratively to solve complex problems in a professional and ethical manner.

**Program Description:** The Master of Science program in Genetic Counseling is a professionally oriented, thesis master’s degree program designed to educate and train students in all aspect of the field of Genetic Counseling. The program is delivered in an online format by faculty who have significant professional work experience and academic competence in the discipline, and it targets students who are current professionals in mid-level careers in industry and government, primarily. The program is professionally accredited by the Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling. Students admitted into the program are expected to complete 24 hours of coursework at the 500-level, and design and conduct a research project leading to a thesis and final oral presentation (thesis defense).

**Program Objectives:** The objectives of the Masters program in Genetic Counseling are as follows:

1. To provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills to identify and solve complex technical problems at the structural level.
2. To enable students to develop as successful professionals in a collaborative, interdisciplinary environment in preparation for highly competitive positions in industry, government, academia, and non-profit organizations.
3. To contribute to and advance the body of knowledge pertaining to the field of Genetic Counseling.
4. To enhance the visibility of the Master of Science in Human Genetics program nationally and internationally.

**Student Learning Outcomes (Associated with Program Objectives 1 and 2):** Upon completion of the Master of Science in Genetic Counseling, students will be able to:

1. ***Demonstrate*** oral and written communication skills to present and publish work in their disciplinary field.
2. ***Analyze and evaluate*** the literature relevant to their area of study.
3. ***Develop*** research objectives and hypotheses through the use of logic and critical thinking.
4. ***Collect, summarize and interpret*** research data.
5. ***Apply*** research theories, methodologies, and disciplinary knowledge to address fundamental questions in their primary area of study.

**Methods of Assessment, Timeframe for Data Collection and Analysis:** The program’s Assessment Committee will collect and analyze data to assess students’ progress in achieving the five core student learning outcomes of the program. Data will be collected according to the following schedule:

| **Student Learning Outcome** | **Data (Direct/Indirect Measures)** | **Source of Data** | **When to Collect** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Demonstrate oral and written communication skills to present and publish work in their disciplinary field | Annual Review  Poster Presentation  Master’s Seminar (offered in Spring Semester)  Published Articles | Student’s Advisor  Student  Seminar Instructor  Student | Annually  Every semester  End of Spring Semester  Every semester |
| Analyze and evaluate the literature relevant to their area of study | Final Oral exam  Thesis  Seminar for Thesis Preparation (Fall Course) | Student’s Advisory Committee  Student’s Advisory Committee  Seminar Instructor | Every semester  Every semester  Fall Semester |
| Develop research objectives and hypotheses through the use of logic and critical thinking. | Research Proposal  Final Oral Exam  Thesis | Student’s Advisory Committee  Student’s Advisory Committee  Student’s Advisory Committee | Every semester  Every semester  Every semester |
| Collect, summarize and interpret research data | Annual Review  Research Proposal  Final Oral Exam  Thesis | Student’s Advisor  Student’s Advisory Committee  Student’s Advisory Committee | Annually  Every semester  Every Semester |
| Apply research theories and best practice guidelines, and disciplinary knowledge to address fundamental questions in their primary area of study | Research Proposal  Final Oral Exam  Thesis | Student’s Advisory Committee  Student’s Advisory Committee  Student’s Advisory Committee | Every semester  Every semester  Every semester |

**Additional Data to Collect to Assess Program Objectives 3 and 4:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Program Objective** | **Data** | **Source of Data** | **When to Collect** |
| To contribute to and advance the body of knowledge pertaining to the field of genetics counseling. | Poster Presentations  Published Articles  Theses | Student  Student  Student’s Advisory Committee | Every semester  Every semester  Every semester |
| To enhance the visibility of the Master of Genetic Counseling nationally and internationally | Poster Presentations  Published Articles  Admissions Statistics  Placement Data | Student  Student  Admissions Committee  Placement Committee | Every semester  Every semester  Every Spring  Every Spring |

**Use of Assessment Data:** The faculty in the Master of Science in Genetic Counseling have established the following committees to assist in the administration and assessment of the program:

* Admissions Committee
* Curriculum Committee
* Assessment Committee
* Placement Committee

Data collected and analyzed by the Assessment Committee with be shared with the program faculty, and specifically with the Curriculum Committee to determine if courses and seminars are meeting the needs of students in the program. Student handbooks will be updated to reflect changes in program policies and requirements. The Admissions and Placement Committees will use aggregated assessment data to enhance marketing, recruitment and placement efforts. Information about student publications and poster presentations will be shared with the program’s Advisory Board to assist in student placement and will be submitted to the national accrediting body’s annual newsletter.