Understanding Your Review

What is the purpose of the review process?

Members of the University Assessment Committee spend long hours reading through annual reports, assessment plans, previous reviews, and other documents in an effort to accomplish two goals.

1. We collect information that is compiled into an institution-wide scan (year-by-year, but including all UND programs over a three-year span). The check marks that you’ll find on your form are especially useful for this “adding up” purpose. Tracking the overall progress of assessment work at UND is part of the committee’s charge, but it is also the only way to know whether we’re making the progress we should – for the benefit of UND’s students – on assessment. Finally, the HLC is very interested in our institutional progress, so this compilation is also of importance for accreditation purposes.

2. Given that committee members spend this time, we want the work to be helpful to the departments/programs reviewed. So we make notes in the form of these “assessment reviews” which are then returned to you. It is our intent to provide notes that will be helpful to you in understanding what we’re noticing. Sometimes we offer suggestions. These are not rules – they are genuine suggestions that we hope might be useful.

What if the suggestions (or critiques) don’t make sense because the readers didn’t understand enough about our program?

That’s entirely possible! We might also be wrong about some of the positive feedback provided, since we don’t know the program accreditation constraints and expectations that you work under, for example. We look at a limited number of documents and do the best we can with them. And each member of the committee comes from a particular context that shapes his or her expectations of “good assessment.” Take things with a grain of salt. But remember that our readings are based on what we found in your departmental report. Sometimes our comments may seem “wrong” because we couldn’t find information that you know exists elsewhere, or perhaps what you wrote wasn’t particularly clear to a reader from outside your field. Consider that these reports DO get read by outsiders! Not only members of the Assessment Committee, but members of the HLC institutional accreditation team will read without insider knowledge. So it is very helpful if you provide enough information to be clear to those outsiders.

Why is my program scored on Essential Studies/Institutional outcomes?

You aren’t. We collect the information using this form because we know there often is strong alignment between departmental goals and Essential Studies/institutional goals. If we find information that speaks to those outcomes, we want to make a special note and pass it along to the ES office. But that’s not because you are expected or required to have goals that align with ES or collect information that may be useful to the ES program. This is just a way of getting one more kind of information from the review process.

Other questions?

Please see Joan Hawthorne or any member of the Assessment Committee. You are especially encouraged to contact those who reviewed your particular program(s), which is why their names are included on your form.