

# NSU Assessment Committee Annual Report

## Accomplishments and Activities for 2019-20

Created for: Provost's Office

Created by: Brenda Mammenga, Director of Institutional Research & Assessment, on behalf of the assessment committee

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*The purpose of this report is to document the tasks and responsibilities accomplished by the committee during the 2019-20 academic year. Not only is this useful information for academic administrators and fellow faculty, but it is a source of evidence of the assessment practices of the Northern State University community that may be of interest to accreditors.*

## Committee Members

Members were recruited by the provost from all four colleges/schools, among staff and faculty, and from academic and non-academic units.

Dr. Lysbeth Benkert-Rasmussen, College of Arts & Sciences  
Dr. Kristi Brownfield, College of Arts & Sciences  
Dr. Erin Fouberg, Academic Affairs  
April Hinze, School of Education  
Britt Lorenz, Student Affairs

Dr. Brenda Mammenga, IR&A, Chair  
Dr. Grant Manhart, School of Fine Arts  
Dr. Shalini Mathew, School of Education  
Dr. Sara Schmidt, School of Business  
Dr. Anna Schwan, School of Education

## Meeting Logistics

The committee met five times during the 2019-20 year, prior to the COVID-19-related campus closure. After each gathering, notes were created by the chair and posted on the committee's webpage on the myNSU portal. The path to this page is listed below.

NSU Faculty Staff → Committees and Councils → Assessment Committee

## Goals for 2019-20

At the end of last year, the committee listed goals for the 2019-20 academic year. They are listed below.

1. Continue to review programmatic assessment plans as they are revised by those units.
2. Assist the assessment process for general education courses.
3. Provide more visible leadership to faculty who are conducting assessment activities in their classes.

## Accomplishments during 2019-20

The NSU faculty handbook states that the assessment committee was established to facilitate the academic assessment process, with the following responsibilities:

- to ensure that assessment in the academic programs becomes an integral and ongoing component;
- to monitor the reporting function of the assessment process;
- to monitor and/or facilitate general education assessment; and
- to coordinate assessment activities among programs.

With those duties in mind, here is a brief list of the committee's accomplishments.

1. The general education assessment summit was canceled by the SDBOR. This created an opportunity to redesign the presentation of general education assessment guidelines to the faculty in the two general education goals of focus this year (#2 Oral Communication and #4 Arts & Humanities). Indeed, Goal 4 faculty were invited to attend a 2-hour interactive discussion during the fall assessment day where they reviewed the BOR rubric for each outcome, participated in a calibration exercise using those rubrics, and heard how artifacts would be collected, assessed, and reported on this campus. The group will meet again next fall to view the summarized results of their assessment efforts, interpret the meaning of those results, and suggest appropriate action to improve student learning.

2. The committee reviewed the results of the general education assessment results from 2018-19 for Goals 3 and 6.
3. Three of the committee members were among seven NSU attendees of a three-day assessment workshop coordinated by HLC. This deep dive in assessment of academic programs reinforced concepts that the committee had described in previously-written “best practices” documents shared with the Northern community and proved useful as the committee reviewed annual assessment reports of academic programs submitted in December.
4. The committee discussed the need for assessing student learning within co-curricular activities. Two subgroups were formed to discuss how to assess the co-curricular activities of internships and international travel. After meeting as their own subgroup, they presented drafts of outcome language, rubrics, a process for students to self-report their perceived learning, a survey for supervisors or chaperones to also rate each student’s growth, and a reporting mechanism for receiving, storing, and using this assessment data.
  - a. Anna Schwan worked with Dominika Blum to explore ways to assess student learning related to international travel. They put a plan in place to pilot a survey during the March 2020 trip to Guatemala and the June 2020 trip to Poland. This student survey was inspired by the assessment tool used by the University of MN – Duluth campus for their international travel programs. However, the global outbreak of COVID-19 caused those trips to be canceled, so this survey has not been piloted yet.
  - b. Britt Lorenz, Sara Schmidt, and April Hinze worked together to develop a common survey that internship supervisors could use at the midpoint and endpoint of a student’s experience. They settled on learning outcomes related to problem solving, ethical reasoning, and critical thinking, and are still exploring how to best incorporate a student reflection component as well. Again, progress stalled when campus closed abruptly in March.
5. Committee members collectively reviewed 39 assessment reports submitted by academic programs at both the undergraduate and graduate level and from each college/school across campus. These reports explained how student learning towards each program learning outcome was assessed during 2018-19, summarized the results observed among the collected artifacts, and suggested possible actions prompted by that analysis. Before the committee could begin reviewing these reports in earnest, the group spent a full meeting discussing what standards would be appropriate for these reviews. This formed the basis for a feedback template that each committee member followed when reviewing their set of assigned reports. Once these reviews were complete, the director forwarded the feedback to the appropriate department and then summarized the results in a brief report to the provost’s office. The report prioritized highlighting the academic programs with exemplary assessment efforts during 2018-19.

## Goals for 2020-21

The committee had its work disrupted when the entire campus community moved to an online format in the spring. Thus, some of these goals are continuations of the unfinished work of 2019-20.

- Pilot co-curricular assessment processes for internships and international travel. If there will be an indefinite pause on students studying abroad, then instead develop a plan for assessing student learning acquired through athletic participation (intercollegiate and/or intramural).
- Among the academic programs with annual assessment reports that did not yet adhere to the best practices guidelines promoted by the committee, conduct outreach to the department chair and the assessment coordinator for the unit. Perhaps pair the individuals in this program with those from a program that submitted an exemplary report. This would be especially appropriate and helpful if there exists such a “mentor” program in the same college/school.
- Provide assistance to the campus committees tasked with updating evidence for the HLC Year 4 Review.
- Review the NSSE data in the fall semester, overlaying this information with other collected assessment data. Forward any insights and/or recommendations to appropriate campus leadership.