



### **Continuous Improvement Blueprint**

The University of South Carolina Upstate seeks to provide support and leadership for ongoing continuous improvement through academic program assessment. The Continuous Improvement Blueprint (formerly known as the “Assessment Report”) is integral to providing rigorous, career relevant, and accessible education to the Upstate of South Carolina community and beyond — which is the first of three strategic priorities for the university Strategic Plan, *Up. Together.*

The Continuous Improvement Blueprint (CIB) is similar to our previous Assessment Report in that it provides a structure for academic programs to report their student learning outcomes and the degree to which students are meeting the outcomes. Where this process differs is its focus on alignment with the overall institutional strategic plan, the centering of continuous improvement, and the documentation of resource needs in order to assist programs in meeting the student learning outcomes.

The CIB is submitted annually on October 1. The CIB will contain all of the following components: Student Learning Outcomes, Methods, Criteria, Results, Interpretation of Results, Action Steps for Improvement, and Resources Needed for Improvement. Each program will maintain a current curriculum map on file with the institution; however, this will not be required annually with the overall CIB.

Designated Faculty Assessment Coordinators will create the CIB with support from their colleges and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance. Faculty Assessment Coordinators will submit each program’s CIB to the Assessment Committee for guidance and feedback. After CIBs are submitted to the Assessment Committee for initial review, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance will review CIBs and provide additional constructive comments and suggestions to help programs continuously improve.

The Faculty Assessment Coordinators will receive support and professional development from the Center for Academic Innovation and Faculty Support, Director of Planning and Research and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance. Together, the aforementioned offices will help Faculty Assessment Coordinators create the documents, gain access to relevant data, and learn about assessment best practice. As part of this support, each program will receive specific data related to enrollment, retention, graduation rates, NACE competencies, advising and post-graduation placement. These data will help programs with their CIBs as it relates to overall programmatic improvement opportunities beyond improvement based on student learning outcomes.

During the initial year of the CIB process, Faculty Assessment Coordinators may choose to utilize the Assessment Report process and template from years prior.

## Academic Program Assessment Policies and Procedures

While the primary focus of the CIB is program level continuous improvement, it also partially fulfills requirements for our accrediting body — The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The CIB addresses Sections 7.1, 7.3, and 8.2. For more information, please visit the [SACSCOC Resource Manual for The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#)

**Continuous Improvement Blueprint**

1. Student Learning Outcomes
  - a. Provide a description of a specific skills, attitudes/dispositions, or knowledge that students or graduates should possess.
  - b. Student learning outcomes should be measurable.
2. Methods
  - a. Assessments that allow students to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and attitudes/dispositions either directly or indirectly.
3. Criteria
  - a. Expected level of achievement for the specific measure.
  - b. Expected level of achievement should be chosen with intent and based upon previous achievement levels.
4. Results
  - a. Data collected that indicates – either directly or indirectly—the degree to which a particular student learning outcome has been demonstrated based on identified methods.
5. Interpretation of Results
  - a. Discuss the meaning of the results in relation to the outcome. Consider the following:
    - i. What the results reveal about the program’s strengths and opportunities;
    - ii. What aspects of the curriculum remained the same and the evidence or data available that indicate the status quo is successful;
    - iii. What were the achievements and challenges in your efforts toward continuous improvement;
    - iv. What results reveal about the strengths and opportunities of past years action steps as it relates to students achieving learning outcomes; and
6. Action Steps for Improvement
  - a. Describe the changes, updates, or adjustments that were made to the program, department, or college to help students meet the desired outcome based on the results.
  - b. Explain the specific action steps you plan to do in the future based on your results.
  - c. Action steps can address more than one outcome.
7. Resources Needed for Improvement
  - a. Resources (fiscal, professional development, lab supplies, space) that the program needs to improve student outcomes or maintain existing high levels of achievement.
  - b. Resources needed can address more than one outcome.

### **Support Structure**

**Faculty Assessment Coordinators** are individuals within each college that author the CIB for one (or more) programs. In addition to completing the CIB, the Faculty Assessment Coordinators are the point of contact for the Assessment Committee, and Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance. Faculty Assessment Coordinators are allowed to serve on a recurring annual basis, attend an annual assessment retreat, and are identified by program and college leadership (Deans, Associate Deans, Assistant Deans, program Chairs). Faculty Assessment Coordinators can also serve on the assessment committee.

The **Assessment Committee (AC)** is charged with providing assessment leadership, oversight, and guidance for the academic programs.

Principal responsibility for successful program assessment, as for curriculum and instruction, rests with the faculty within the discipline. Upon request of the academic unit, the committee provides technical support in the measurement of unit-determined goal outcomes, the measurement of improvement, and the interpretation of assessment results. The Assessment Committee is responsible for developing campus-wide awareness and understanding of outcomes assessment, developing a systematic process for collecting and maintaining unit assessment plans, and providing guidance to departments and programs on the assessment requirements of external agencies (USC Upstate Faculty Manual).

The committee consists of trained assessment faculty who provide assessment leadership for all programs. One assessment committee member and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance will review each CIB.

The **Center for Academic Innovation and Faculty Support** will provide ongoing professional development to help meet the needs and interests of faculty related to a continuous improvement, assessment best practice, and innovative pedagogical practices. This support will be in the form of one-on-one assistance, professional development trainings, courses, and institutes.

The **Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance (IEC)** provides support to the Assessment Committee and Faculty Assessment Coordinators. This support includes one-on-one consultations as well as ongoing professional development trainings through the Center for Academic Innovation and Faculty Support. Additionally, the IEC will provide administrative support to the Assessment Committee and review CIBs.

The **Director of Research and Planning** provides appropriate and relevant data to the programs, Faculty Assessment Coordinators, and the IEC to support the CIB process. When needed, the Director of Research and Planning can provide one-on-one consultations with programs to help identify existing data sources and potential analyses for decision-making.

**Appendix A**

**Note:** The Assessment Committee members utilize this rubric to assist programs as they focus on the process of assessment and using best practice to create continuous improvement

<b>Category</b>	<b>Meets</b>	<b>Approaching</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Insufficient</b>
Student Learning Outcome (SLO)	100% of SLOs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific (indicating skill, knowledge, or attitude that students should achieve)</li> <li>• Measurable (able to be aligned with at least one direct or indirect measure)</li> <li>• Achievable</li> </ul>	75% of SLOs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific to outcome (indicating skill, knowledge, or attitude that students should achieve)</li> <li>• Measurable (able to be aligned with at least one direct or indirect measure)</li> <li>• Achievable</li> </ul>	50% of SLOs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not specific to outcome (indicating skill, knowledge, or attitude that students should achieve)</li> <li>• Not measurable (able to be aligned with at least one direct or indirect measure)</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not achievable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 50% of SLOs are either not specific (indicating skill, knowledge, or attitude that students should achieve)</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SLOs are unmeasurable as written</li> </ul>
Methods	100% of methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align with specific SLOs and are clearly a direct or indirect indication of the associated SLO</li> <li>• Specific questions on quizzes and/or tests are identified if indicated as the measure. If a project or essay is indicated as the measure, a rubric is referenced and included.</li> </ul>	75% methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align with specific SLOs and are clearly a direct or indirect indication of the associated SLO</li> </ul>	50% of methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State alignment</li> <li>• The direct or indirect indication to a specific SLO is not immediately clear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is not a clear indication of direct or indirect measure of any SLO</li> </ul>
Criteria	100% of criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly aligned with a specific measure</li> <li>• Explicitly states the expected level of achievement and the percentage of students expected to reach level of achievement</li> </ul>	75% of criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly aligned with a specific measure</li> <li>• Explicitly states the expected level of achievement</li> </ul>	50% of criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly aligned with a specific measure</li> <li>• Explicitly states the expected level of achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less than 50% of criteria are clearly aligned with specific measures and do not explicitly state level of expected achievement</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criteria not present</li> </ul>

Category	Meets	Approaching	Developing	Insufficient
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data is present for each SLO and stated method</li> <li>All data are presented in a manner that clearly articulates which SLO and method it is associated with and reported in terms of the previously stated criteria</li> <li>States whether SLOs were met</li> <li>Trend and/or relevant subgroup data is included</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>75% of data are presented in a manner that clearly articulates which SLO and method it is associated with and reported in terms of the previously stated criteria</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50% of data are presented in a manner that clearly articulates which SLO and method it is associated; however, the reader has to assume which results are associated with specific methods and SLOs for some results</li> <li>Data this not available is explained.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results are either not present (in a program for which there should be results) or indecipherable in terms of what data is associated with which method and SLO</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data that is not available is not explained</li> </ul>
Interpretation of Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpretations are available for each method/result presented in the CIB</li> <li>The interpretations fully addresses each area of CIB policies and procedures (5a) with clarity and specificity that clearly aligns with the SLOs, methods and results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpretations are available for at least 75% of methods/results presented in the CIB</li> <li>The interpretations addresses most areas of CIB policies and procedures (5a)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpretations are available for 50% of methods/results presented in the CIB</li> <li>The interpretation addresses some areas of CIB policies and procedures (5a), but leaves the reader to make inferences regarding the results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpretations are insufficient in that it does not address 5a meaningfully and fully</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No interpretation included in the CIB</li> </ul>
Action Steps for Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action steps for the upcoming academic year clearly align with the results presented in the CIB and specifically describe all the changes, updates or adjustments that will be made to help students meet learning outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action steps for improvement clearly align with the results and <i>generally</i> describe changes, updates or adjustments will be made in the upcoming year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The action steps for the upcoming academic year provided do not <i>clearly</i> align with results presented in the CIB and <i>generally</i> describe changes, updates or adjustments will be made in the upcoming year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no actions steps provided</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The action steps for the upcoming academic year provided do not align with results presented in the CIB and do not describe changes, updates, or adjustments</li> </ul>

Academic Program Assessment Policies and Procedures

Category	Meets	Approaching	Developing	Insufficient
Resources Needed for Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stated resources – fiscal, professional, and physical – clearly align with the stated actions steps for improvement and interpretation of results</li> <li>• Resources specifically address how the continuation of existing resources AND the request for new resources will contribute to improved student learning outcomes</li> <li>• Clearly states when no additional or current resources are needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stated resources – fiscal, professional, and physical – clearly align with the stated actions steps for improvement and interpretation of results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stated resources – fiscal, professional, and physical – do not clearly align with the stated actions steps for improvement and interpretation of results</li> <li>• The reader has to make the connection or assume the connection is there between resources and action steps for improvement and interpretation of results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No resources are provided and does not clearly state that there are no additional or current resources needed</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stated resources do not clearly align with the interpretation of results and stated action steps for improvement</li> </ul>

**Appendix B**

**Note:** Assessment Committee members will utilize the Constructive Comments form to provide feedback to Faculty Assessment Coordinators regarding ways to improve their assessment processes.

**Constructive Comments**

Constructive comments are intended to detail the processes outlined within the CIB that are exceptionally well executed and suggestions for how to improve assessment processes in the future.

Category	Constructive Comments
Student Learning Outcomes	
Methods	
Criteria	
Results	
Interpretation of Results	
Action Steps for Improvement	
Resources Needed for Improvement	

**Appendix C\***

Continuous Improvement Blueprint for Academic Programs

**Continuous Improvement Blueprint Report**

**Student Learning Outcome:**

<b>Methods &amp; Criteria</b>	
<b>Results</b>	
<b>Interpretation of Results</b>	
<b>Action Steps for Improvement</b>	
<b>Resources Needed for Improvement</b>	

\*Copy and paste the table as many times as necessary for each SLO.