

Kennesaw State University
WellStar College of Health and Human Services
WellStar School of Nursing

Assessment Philosophy and Continuous Program Improvement Plan

For the purposes of higher education, assessment is the systematic collection, review, and reflection upon educational programs and is focused on improving student learning and development (Association of American Colleges and Universities and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 2008; Hernon, Dugan & Schwartz, 2006; Palomba & Banta, 2001; Palomba & Banta, 1999). The Kennesaw State University (KSU) WellStar School of Nursing (WSN) mission, philosophy, goals, and program and student learning outcomes are intimately linked to the WSON's assessment plan. The primary purpose of the plan is to foster continuous program improvement. The plan directs faculty to ascertain program strengths and areas for improvement in order to enhance program effectiveness in meeting the needs of the student and the community. A secondary purpose of the plan is to continually evaluate and refine strategies to assure the most appropriate means of assessing the program and student learning outcomes.

Assessment of program and student learning outcomes is an expectation of programs of nursing education. Program outcomes are performance-based factors which include quality and productivity. Student learning outcomes assess the knowledge a student should possess upon completion of the learning process (Raup, King, Hughes, & Faidley, 2010). Instruments of student learning outcome assessment include the National Council Licensing Examination (NCLEX) for Registered Nurses, which all undergraduates must pass to be employable in the field of nursing; and the nurse practitioner/advanced practice certification exams sponsored by American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) or American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP). All nurse practitioner graduates must pass the certification exam in order to be credentialed for advanced nursing practice within the State of Georgia.

Assessment Process

Assessment is a collaborative process that involves faculty, staff, students, and the professional community. The assessment process should be regularly examined for utility, feasibility, propriety, accuracy, continuity, and flexibility (Palomba & Banta, 1999). The continuous improvement framework for the WSON is shown in Figure A. The Comprehensive Evaluation Plan (CEP) provides the overall evaluation criteria, phases for data collection, analysis, and synthesis of recommendations and decision-making for the WSON. The Total Assessment Blueprint (TAB) provides the expected student learning outcomes for the graduates of each nursing program within the WSON. The TAB articulates the means of assessment with statements of expectation, the time frame and party responsible for data collection, data analysis and reporting, as well as the use of results for continuous quality improvement.

The Undergraduate and Graduate Program Evaluation Committees are the oversight bodies that ensure the CEP is being followed. The Program Evaluation Committees receive information from various committees on surveys, BSN testing program, and other reports to summarize, evaluate, and present recommendations to the faculty for continuous quality improvement. Specific responsibilities for the Program Evaluation Committees and various other committees are outlined in the WSON Bylaws.

Comprehensive Evaluation Plan

The CEP is the WSON's written document to guide faculty during the process of continuous program improvement. The CEP is divided into four sections (Mission & Governance; Institutional Commitment & Resources; Curriculum & Teaching Learning Practices; Assessment & Achievement), representing the four standards of program quality assessed by CCNE for program accreditation. Each program quality standard contains various elements that are assessed by WSON faculty. For each element, the evaluation methodology required, sources of information/data needed, a timeframe for data collection, oversight responsibility, and the procedure for documentation of outcomes and program changes/revisions are outlined in detail. The undergraduate and graduate nursing programs each have TAB documents that specifically outline the multiple assessment measures and sources needed for data collection. Assessment requirements mandated by KSU's Academic Program Assessment Plan are also incorporated into the CEP.

Total Assessment Blueprint

The faculty believes that program and student learning outcomes are best assessed by using multiple assessment measures. The TABS for the undergraduate and graduate programs document the multiple assessment measures used. The WSON faculty has carefully selected a variety of methods and approaches to assess program and student learning outcomes. Annual review of the appropriateness of assessment methods with regard to validity and reliability is an essential part of the continuous quality improvement cycle of the WSON. The Program Evaluation Committees and other associated committees review each of the assessment methods annually, or more frequently if necessary, to determine program effectiveness and to foster continuous improvement.

Methods Used by Both the Undergraduate and Graduate Master's Programs

The following assessment methods are used by both undergraduate and graduate Master's programs:

Exit Survey

Undergraduate nursing students are surveyed electronically via a department-created assessment instrument immediately upon graduation from the nursing program. Results are tabulated and analyzed by the Survey Committee, and presented to the Undergraduate Program Evaluation Committee (UPEC) for further analysis, with an emphasis on evaluating the nursing program's student learning outcomes. Results and findings are presented annually to the undergraduate nursing faculty regarding potential curricular implications.

Graduate students who are in their last semester of any one of the master's programs are assessed with a survey form. Students evaluate their current perceptions of the strengths and limitations of the program in preparing them for advanced practice nursing roles. This information will be of value in continuous graduate program improvement. Results are tabulated and analyzed by the Graduate Curriculum and Program Evaluation Committee (GCPEC). Results and findings are presented annually to the graduate faculty regarding potential curricular implications.

Employer Survey

Employers of graduates from the undergraduate nursing program are surveyed electronically via a department-created assessment instrument 9 – 11 months after the students' graduation (dependent on the graduate providing employer contact information as part of the Alumni Survey). Results are tabulated and analyzed by the Survey Committee. In addition, designated persons of clinical agencies that employ KSU nursing graduates are periodically contacted and asked to complete a survey. All undergraduate employer survey results are analyzed by the Survey Committee and presented to the UPEC for further analysis, with an emphasis on evaluating the nursing program's student learning outcomes. Results and findings are presented annually to the undergraduate nursing faculty regarding potential curricular implications.

Actual and potential employers of graduates of the master's programs are randomly contacted (e.g., telephone calls) every three years to evaluate their current perceptions of KSU WSON graduates with regard to program strengths, and areas where graduates could be better prepared for advanced practice nursing roles. Graduates are

asked to provide employer contact information. Preceptors of graduate students are considered potential employers. The faculty believes that evaluation by current or potential employers provides data regarding overall satisfaction with the WSON program and information about the students' or graduates' abilities. Results are tabulated and analyzed by GCPEC. Results and findings are presented when available to the graduate faculty regarding potential curricular implications.

Methods Used by the Undergraduate Program

The following assessment methods are used by the undergraduate program:

Current Comprehensive Testing Program

This is an assessment approach that is being used extensively by the Baccalaureate program and provided by Assessment Technologies Incorporated (ATI). Students are required to participate in this testing program. ATI testing begins in the first clinical nursing course (NURS 3209) and continues with testing throughout the program. At the end of the curriculum (NURS4417), students take the RN Comprehensive Predictor Exam which provides a predictor of success on the NCLEX-RN exam. The costs for these tests are covered by the student testing fees paid upon entrance to the nursing program.

The purpose of this testing program is to prepare the student for success in practice by providing exercises for applying nursing knowledge and identifying areas appropriate for remediation. The testing program is also intended to reduce student attrition and to increase student pass rates on the licensure exam.

Faculty select various standardized achievement tests to help students prepare for the NCLEX-RN, and guide students on how to interpret test scores and identify areas to review. The ATI exam may be a proctored and/or assigned as a practice test, depending on the course. Overall class results are reviewed and analyzed by the Undergraduate Program Testing Committee. These results, as well as observations and recommendations, are presented to the undergraduate faculty annually regarding potential curriculum implications.

NCLEX Pass Rates

All graduates must pass the registered nurse licensing examination, the NCLEX, in order to be employable in the field of nursing. Data gathered about demonstrated program achievement include the percentage of graduates successfully completing the NCLEX examination on the first attempt. According to the Rules and Regulations of the State of Georgia (2001), an "acceptable performance on the licensing examination for each nursing education program shall be a passing rate of eighty (80) percent of its first-time writers in any given calendar year" (Regulation 410-3-.08). Results are compiled and examined by the Undergraduate Program Evaluation Committee (UPEC) based on preset criteria listed in the TAB and presented to the undergraduate faculty annually regarding potential curricular implications. NCLEX pass rate data are also presented to the full WSON faculty biannually.

Alumni Survey

Undergraduate nursing students are surveyed electronically via a department-created assessment 9 – 11-months post-graduation of the nursing program. Results are tabulated and analyzed by the Survey Committee, and presented to the UPEC for further analysis, with an emphasis on evaluating the nursing program's student learning outcomes. Results and findings are presented annually to the undergraduate nursing faculty regarding potential curricular implications.

Preceptor Survey

During the last semester of the undergraduate nursing program, students are enrolled in a clinical capstone preceptorship. Senior student preceptors are surveyed electronically via a department-created assessment instrument near the end of the semester. Results are tabulated and analyzed by the Survey Committee and presented to the UPEC for further analysis, with an emphasis on evaluating the nursing program's student

learning outcomes. Results and findings are presented annually to the undergraduate nursing faculty regarding potential curricular implications.

Scholarly Papers/Projects/Course Assignments

To enhance the robustness of the assessment process, a variety of graded course activities, assignments, tests, and/or competencies have been identified as appropriate measures of specified student learning outcomes. The courses are taken at or near the end of the baccalaureate program. These graded activities have been determined by the faculty of the involved courses to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and/or competencies involved and to align with the specified learning outcomes. Guidelines and/or rubrics specific to each assessment are outlined in the course syllabi. Faculty within the courses compile and report final data to the Program Evaluation Committee for further analysis. Results and potential curricular implications are presented to the faculty annually.

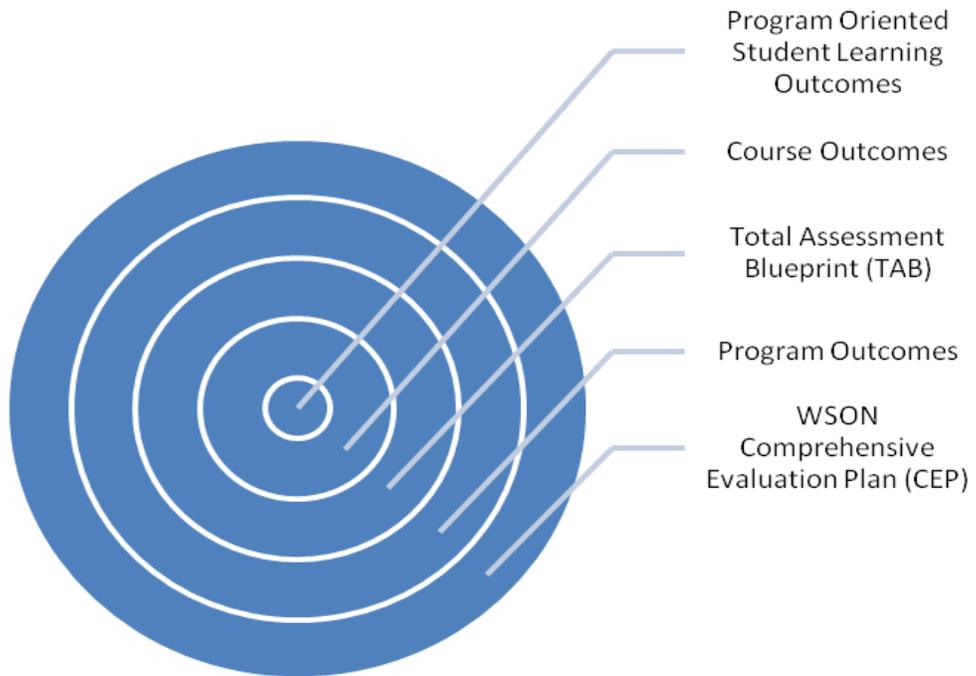
Use of the CEP for Continuous Program Improvement

A key principle of the continuous improvement process is to use data to develop specific, effective strategies to enhance student learning (Association of American Colleges and Universities and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 2008). Program and student learning outcome data are collected and analyzed by the undergraduate and graduate programs, as outlined by the CEP, for the purpose of continuous program improvement. On an ongoing basis, the program evaluation committees report assessment data and recommendations to their respective faculties for discussion of changes and revisions to program curricula, policies, documents, etc. The discussion and recommendations for program changes are documented in the undergraduate and graduate faculty meeting minutes. A summary of undergraduate or graduate program-specific changes are reported to the full faculty on an annual or biannual basis. Changes to policies or documents that are WSON-specific, rather than program-specific, are discussed and voted upon by the full faculty of the WSON.

References

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Figure A: Continuous Improvement Framework for the WellStar School of Nursing



**Table A: Undergraduate Program
Student Learning Outcomes Evidence of Learning**

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME	NCLEX Pass Rate	ATI Comp. Predictor	Alum Survey	Employer Survey	Exit Survey	Preceptor Survey	4416 Leadership Project	4417 Clinical Reflective Journal	4417 EBP Clinical Project	4417 Professional Communication/Behavior	4417 Clinical Skills Checkoff	4412 Population Project	4412 Family Assessment
1	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x		
2	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x
3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	
4	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x			x	x
5	x	x	x	x	x	x		x			x		
6			x	x	x	x		x	x			x	
7	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
8	x	x	x	x	x	x		x				x	x
9	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x