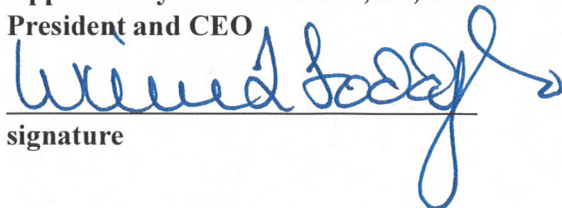Approved by Willie L. Todd, Jr., Ph.D.
President and CEO

signature

Policy Name: <u>Assessment of Student Achievement Policy</u>

Policy Number <u># 03.10.05.02</u>

Date <u>05/15/2023</u>

Review Date <u>04/25/2023</u>

DENMARK TECHNICAL COLLEGE

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY # 03.10.05.02 (2020) ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT POLICY

Policy Title: Assessment of Student Achievement Policy

Policy Type: Administrative

Policy Number: ADM Policy # 03.10.05.02 (2020)

Legal Authority: Section 59-53-51 of the 1976 Code of Laws of South Carolina, As Amended

State Board Policy: N/A

Approval Date: 7/6/2020

Responsible Office: Academic Affairs

Responsible Executive: Vice President of Academic Affairs

Applies to: College Community

POLICY STATEMENT:

The goal of the Conceptual Framework Team on 21st Century Learning (hereafter referred to as the Team) is to optimize student success for work and life, and, specifically, to strengthen curricular options to ensure that graduates are prepared with the competencies necessary for employment and civic engagement. The policy proposed by this team includes a commitment to collaboration with divisions to measure the quality of undergraduate education, including civic engagement of graduates and relevance to in-demand occupations across regions of the state.

This policy identifies critical competencies for student success and establishes guidelines for the assessment of student achievement. The policy is grounded in the belief that good assessment is a valuable tool that, properly wielded, helps to improve and enhance teaching and facilitate greater levels of student learning.

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DEFINITIONS

Assessment refers to a systematic effort to gather and analyze information to make broader judgments about quality or level of performance. For the purposes of this policy, assessment will focus primarily on student learning and development.

Competency is used primarily as a general term for an area of knowledge or skill.

Outcomes are specific and measurable expectations for performance.

Learning outcomes refer to expectations about what students will know or be able to do after participating in each educational experience.

CONTACT(S)

The Office of the Registrar will officially interpret this policy. The Vice President of Academic Affairs is responsible for obtaining approval for any revisions as required through the appropriate governance structures. Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Office of Academic Affairs.

STAKEHOLDER(S)

College Community: to include students, Office of the Registrar, Office of Financial Aid, and the Office of Fiscal Affairs.

POLICY CONTENT

I. Aspirational Statement on Quality

A high-quality college education must promote students' intellectual and personal growth in ways that equip them to succeed in work and life. Higher education seeks to impart learning that is broadly relevant, intellectual skills that are rigorous and widely adaptable, and dispositions and knowledge that contribute to a productive role in one's personal and social relations. To that end, a college education at Denmark Technical College (DTC), regardless of major or specialized field of study, ideally should emphasize:
- Broad learning about science, society, technology, arts and humanities, human diversity, and global cultures and interdependence;
- Intellectual and practical skills that support evidence-based reasoning and innovation—including analysis, communication, critical and creative thinking, quantitative fluency, information literacy, and collaborative problem solving;

- Integrative and adaptive learning, including the demonstrated ability to apply knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to complex problems and new settings;
- Personal and social responsibility, including ethical reasoning, civic and democratic knowledge and engagement, global acumen, and the capacity to work productively with diverse people and perspectives.[i]

II. Principles Guiding Assessment and Quality Assurance

The Team affirms and are guided by the following principles:
- Student learning is the core mission of higher education.
- A high-quality education is about more than access, completion, and post-college wages. Consistent with the "Aspirational Statement on Quality" above, undergraduate education must equip students with the tools and skills they need to succeed in their chosen professions and to lead lives of meaning and purpose.
- Students attending DTC may have different needs based on their personal histories, identities, and life circumstances. It is essential that divisions pay attention to educational quality as it pertains to various subgroups to ensure all students—regardless of their background, identities, or circumstances—receive a high-quality education.
- The skills and preparation of incoming students vary greatly, as do institutional missions. Consequently, assessment should focus on outcomes, student learning, and program improvement rather than on single or common standards for all students.
- Quality assessment helps DTC communicate its value. By appropriately sharing information about assessment findings and plans for improvement, DTC contributes to building public trust in higher education.
- High-quality learning is facilitated by high-quality teaching. To that end, DTC should make deliberate efforts to support faculty and other teaching staff in deepening their understanding of effective teaching, learning, and assessment.
- Quality enhancement is a shared responsibility, involving institutional leaders, faculty and staff, students, families, governmental and non-governmental entities, and the public. True improvement can occur only when all parties look beyond mere compliance to engage in a collaborative process of genuine quality enhancement.
- Good assessment is a tool, not an end, and it can take many forms. Regardless of the specific approach adopted, assessment should provide meaningful information that can be used to validate effective practices, identify areas where change is needed, and verify whether improvement has occurred.
- Institutional assessment processes benefit from periodic review. By reviewing the assessment process itself (rather than simply assessment results), DTC can be confident that their assessment strategies in fact provide the information faculty and institutional leaders need, or they can adjust those processes as necessary to improve their effectiveness.

III. Parameters for Assessment

This policy focuses on core competencies that are critical to the success of all undergraduates,

regardless of their field of study. The Team recognizes that all divisions are required to conduct comprehensive assessments of their educational programs to maintain their accreditation with regional and specialized accrediting agencies. As accrediting agencies and the Team share a goal to ensure the quality and effectiveness of postsecondary education, the academic divisions are encouraged to optimize their assessment efforts by integrating assessment activities being done in fulfillment of each agency's requirements.

1. Expectations for Student Learning and Development

A. Competencies
DTC will assess student achievement in at least six competency areas, representing several different types of knowledge and/or skills.
Four core competencies will be assessed:
1) **Critical thinking**–the ability to subject one's own and others' ideas, arguments, assumptions, and evidence to careful and logical scrutiny in order to make an informed judgment, draw a sound conclusion, or solve a problem.
2) **Written communication**–the ability to develop and communicate ideas effectively in writing as appropriate to a given context, purpose, and audience. It includes a variety of styles, genres, and media, including computer-mediated communications.
3) **Quantitative reasoning**–the ability to manipulate, analyze, and/or evaluate numbers and numerical data. It may involve calculation and/or analysis and interpretation of quantitative information derived from existing databases or systematic observations, and may be based in a variety of disciplines, not limited to mathematics and the natural and physical sciences.
4) **Civic engagement**–an array of knowledge, abilities, values, attitudes, and behaviors that in combination allow individuals to contribute to the civic life of their communities. It may include, among other things, exploration of one's role and responsibilities in society; knowledge of and ability to engage with political systems and processes; and/or course-based or extra-curricular efforts to identify and address issues of public or community concern.

Two additional competencies will be selected by a survey of the faculty, staff, and students of DTC. These competencies shall reflect ongoing institutional priorities for student learning and development and shall be broadly applicable across the student population. These competencies may be changed if educational priorities shift; but otherwise, it is expected that the same two competencies will be assessed over multiple assessment cycles.

B. Outcomes
Each division shall articulate one or more student-focused outcomes (i.e., what students are expected to know or be able to do) within each of its chosen competencies and within each of the core competencies of critical thinking, written communication, and quantitative reasoning. Divisions may tailor the descriptions of the core competencies provided above to align more closely with their mission and curriculum, if necessary. Outcomes for civic engagement may address dimensions other than student learning (e.g., student attitudes, voting behavior, participation in civic engagement activities). However,

when divisions provide learning experiences specifically designed to enhance students' capacity for civic engagement, the assessment of this competency should address the quality of student learning. As with the other competency areas, divisions may tailor the description of civic engagement provided above to align more closely with the mission and curriculum of the division.

Expectations for achievement in all six competencies shall be articulated as institution-level outcomes (for competencies developed through general education or across divisions) or as program-level outcomes (for competencies developed primarily through students' majors or other defined curricular and co-curricular programs).

2. Assessment Strategies and Methods

In assessing critical thinking, written communication, quantitative reasoning, and the two additional chosen competencies, divisions shall employ rigorous strategies that rely primarily on direct measures (i.e., using actual student work or student performance) and that allow for inferences about the abilities of the general student population. (It is not appropriate, for example, to limit the assessment of quantitative reasoning to students who are majoring in mathematics.) Indirect measures and logical inferences may be used to complement direct assessments. Similarly, rigorous assessment strategies should be used for civic engagement to the extent that those strategies are appropriate for the outcome(s) being assessed. Proxy indicators (e.g., participation rates) and indirect measures (e.g., student self-reports) are acceptable for this competency, particularly for the assessment of non-cognitive outcomes. Assessments of student learning and development in civic engagement may focus on the students who participate in relevant learning experiences, even if those students represent a self-selected group. Assessment strategies for all six competencies must produce information that can be used to (1) substantiate judgments about the degree to which the stated outcomes have been achieved, and (2) guide changes to enhance teaching and learning.

Identifying and attending to possible disparities in student achievement is critical to ensuring a high-quality education for all students. To that end, assessment data should be disaggregated where possible and to the extent that comparisons among student groups would be meaningful.

Assessment of the six competencies may be done at the level of general education, disciplinary and interdisciplinary degree programs, curricular and co-curricular programs, or a combination of these, depending on the needs and priorities of the division and the particular outcome being assessed. Assessment strategies may include methods that generate quantitative data, qualitative data, or both.

Divisions may collaborate in their assessments if doing so offers mutual benefit and is appropriate for the outcome(s) being assessed. However, each division is required to report its assessment plans and activities separately, as described below.

IV. Schedule of Reporting and Review
1. Assessment Plans
Each division shall submit a plan articulating the following:
  * The specific outcome(s) it intends to assess within each competency;

- The assessment strategies and methods to be used for each competency, including plans for the disaggregation of data;
- The schedule for assessing each outcome and reporting the results. Divisions may use their discretion as to the schedule and length of the assessment cycle for each individual outcome. However, all outcomes must be assessed at least once in any 3-year period.

Plans will be reviewed and approved by the Leadership Team to ensure appropriate scope and rigor.

2. **Assessment Reports**

Assessment offers a means for communicating with the public about the quality of Denmark Technical College's programs. Assessment reports, therefore, must be accessible to the public and must clearly answer the following questions:

- What does an institution expect students to learn or do?
- What courses, experiences, or activities allow students to develop their knowledge and/or abilities in these areas?
- How do faculty and staff know whether—and how well—students have learned?
- Are the institution's expectations in these areas being met?
- How does/will the institution use this information to improve students' educational experience and enhance future achievement?[ii]
- Have changes made based on previous assessment findings had the desired effect?

Divisions shall generate and maintain a publicly available document and/or website providing answers to these questions in language that can be understood by a general audience. This document/website may also include other performance metrics or information that addresses the quality of students' educational experience (e.g., standardized exam scores, rates of participation in high-impact practices). The document/website shall be updated annually to reflect new findings as institutions cycle through their assessments of the six competencies.

The Leadership Team will provide guidance regarding the content and structure of the public assessment report. Assessment plans and reports will be reviewed by the Leadership Team as they are submitted/posted, and feedback will be provided. Divisions will be advised of any identified deficiencies and may be required to make revisions or develop a corrective plan of action.

Addendum 1: Other Competencies for Consideration

1. **Oral Communications**— the ability to develop and communicate ideas effectively through the spoken word as appropriate to a given context, purpose, and audience. It includes active listening, recognizing nonverbal cues, and overcoming barriers to effective communication.
2. **Digital Technologies**—the ability to use various pieces of hardware and software to improve one's own personal productivity.
3. **Professionalism**—the ability to manage one's time effectively, taking advantage of opportunities for growth and development, presenting oneself as employable, and maintaining a motivational drive.

4. **Teamwork and Collaboration**—the ability to work towards a desired goal with others, recognizing individual strengths and weaknesses and assigning workloads to appropriate team members.
5. **Conflict Resolution**—the ability to recognize problematic behavior and resolve disagreements in a work setting to ensure an amicable environment.
6. **Stress Management**—the ability to recognize stressful situations and develop strategies to cope with stress arising from various sources in life.

Addendum 2: College wide outcomes for Written Communications
1. Demonstrate a thorough understanding of purpose, audience, and the context/circumstance.
2. Demonstrate excellent management of syntax and mechanics.
3. Demonstrate attention to details including appropriate style, and acceptable format.
4. Demonstrate use of research-based sources/evidence that are relevant, credible, and sufficient to build an argument in the writing.

TITLE: POLICY CONTENTS PUBLICATION

The policy will be widely distributed to the College community. To ensure timely publication and distribution thereof, the Vice President of Academic Affairs will make every effort to:

- Communicate the policy in writing, electronically, or otherwise to the College community, including current and prospective students within fourteen (14) days of approval;
- Submit this policy for inclusion in the Policy Library within fourteen (14) days of approval;
- Post the policy on the College's webpage and all other related webpages, in the student handbook, and the College catalog; and
- Educate and train all stakeholders and appropriate audiences on the policy's content as necessary.

REVIEW SCHEDULE

- Next Scheduled Review: 7/6/2026

- Approval by College Cabinet, 7/6/2020

- Revision History: None

- Supersedes: N/A

RELATED DOCUMENTS

There are no documents related to this policy.

FORMS

There are no forms related to this policy.

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[i] These four hallmarks of a quality education and their descriptions were taken—and slightly modified—from the LEAP Employer-Educator Compact, published in 2013 by the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U). http://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/LEAP/compact.pdf

[ii] This may be more relevant for some competencies than others, depending on the assessment findings and institutional priorities.