



Campus Principles of Assessment

As the tenth and newest campus of the University of California, UC Merced unites high quality undergraduate, graduate, and research programs in a community bound by learning, discovery, and engagement. Drawing on the inquiry-oriented mindset of a research university, the Principles of Assessment that follow describe the aspirational values and intentions that inform and support assessment as engaged by faculties, staffs, and students across the campus in support of excellence in our mission of education, research, and public service. Because the Principles address assessment as practiced campus-wide, they are necessarily general. They do, however, implicitly respect and support shared governance, in particular the faculty's direct control of educational curriculum and degree programs as empowered by the UC Board of Regents.

1. The UC Merced community engages in assessment as a means of inquiry that reflects and draws on the values and practices of a research university.

Through assessment, we ensure that our education, research, public service and supporting administrative efforts reap the benefits of inquiry. Our assessment activities are informed by the professional literatures addressing undergraduate and graduate education, higher education management, and organizational learning, but with a focus on gaining insights that enhance the educational success of our students and the achievement of our research mission.

2. We engage in systematic, ongoing assessment in order to continuously improve undergraduate and graduate student learning, student success, and the achievement of our research mission.

Toward this end, we value formative assessment practices that yield insights to which we can respond with action, including the action of making no change.

3. We apply scholarly practices to ensure that we assess what we value, and not value only that which we can easily assess.

We recognize that any complex endeavor can be ill-represented and served by simple statistics or measures. For instance, we know that student learning and development is multi-dimensional, non-linear and recursive, reflecting diverse experiences inside and outside of the classroom, and further, that the impact of a research university education is made manifest in contributions over graduates' lifetimes. Thus, we accept the challenge of assessing the complexity inherent in the educational and research mission of the institution, and address it using the conventions of a scholar or professional practitioner in light of the intellectual resources of a research university.

4. We share our assessment activities in ways that preserve our focus on candid engagement in improvement-oriented inquiry, facilitate the exchange of practices and meaningful insights, and address external expectations for accountability.

Improvement-oriented assessment requires an environment that supports and reinforces candid investigation of how well we are achieving our goals, while simultaneously promoting a shared understanding of what we aim to achieve, what we are achieving, how we are achieving it, and what we need to continue to improve. In making decisions about what to share and how, we prioritize actions that will preserve engagement in questions of institutional significance, with due consideration of external calls for transparency and accountability. As a community united by a common mission, we support our colleagues' endeavors through actions that are consistent with these values.



5. We engage our undergraduate and graduate students in the extension of our disciplinary research cultures to the exploration and evaluation of learning, teaching, and the services that support our educational and research enterprises.

We recognize that our students are learners and teachers, stewarding their own and others' learning in partnership with faculty and staff. In academic and co-curricular contexts, we encourage, prepare, and engage our students to apply their understanding of evidence-informed inquiry to personal, programmatic, and institutional questions of learning and success in educational, professional, and research contexts.

6. We recognize that to have meaningful impact and to be sustainable, assessment must

- **Originate in the work we already do,**
- **Support institutional priorities,**
- **Be integrated into core institutional planning and decision making processes, including the allocation of resources (budgeting),**
- **Be included in expectations for professional practice, and**
- **Be advocated by leadership.**

Meaningful assessment originates in and draws on the work of learning, teaching, mentoring, and administrative support. It connects the work of individual faculty, staff and students to shared educational and research goals and to the administrative service objectives in support of this enterprise. As part of professional practice, assessment must be appropriately supported, developed, resourced, and valued, most significantly through its integration into institutional planning and decision-making processes.

References:

- [Educational Effectiveness Review Report for Initial Accreditation](#) . The University of California, Merced. December, 2010.
- [UC Merced Division of Student Affairs Program Review Guidelines](#). 2011.
- UC Merced Policy for Annual Assessment and Periodic Review of Administrative Units.
- UC Merced [Undergraduate](#) and [Graduate](#) Program Review Policies and Procedures.
- UC Merced Format Guidelines for Academic Program Learning Outcomes.
- [Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning](#). The American Association of Higher Education Principles. December, 1992.
- [The UC Way to Educational Effectiveness](#). A Report of the Undergraduate Educational Effectiveness Task Force. July, 2009.
- The [Mission](#) of the University of California, Merced.