

STANDARDIZED EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES (STEPS) GUIDEBOOK

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OVERVIEW

WWCC's Standardized Evaluation of Programs and Services (STEPS) provides an inclusive, equitable, and systematic framework to evaluate the contributions of all programs and services at the college towards student success, inform meaningful change by identifying needs and setting priorities, effectively allocate college resources, and plan for continuous improvement in alignment with the college's [vision, mission, and strategic goals](#).

This guidebook provides instructions on submitting the annual STEPS report, context and rationale for how and why certain information is required, information on the STEPS standards that programs should meet, and references that may aid STEPS reporters and STEPS evaluators in determining a program's strengths and areas for improvement.

All information, including this guidebook, report templates, and the upload portal for the submission of completed reports, is available from the [STEPS section](#) of the [Integrated Planning and Budgeting](#) webpage. Programs should start the process early in fall term, assembling a team of stakeholders to help gather and analyze information. **STEPS reports are due to be submitted to Institutional Effectiveness Council (IEC) by the last Friday of December**, to help inform the budget and planning cycles. IEC, or a constituent committee, will review reports using the evaluation criteria supplied in this guidebook to offer feedback to help program personnel improve effectiveness.

The primary goals of the STEPS process is to help programs identify needs, set objectives, and measure progress towards those goals. STEPS reports after the initial year, therefore, will ask about progress and updates on previous years' plans.

PROGRAMS

STEPS is primarily a process of self-reflection and analysis, and the reporting programs are themselves the primary beneficiaries; however, college administrators should also gain insight into the work of reporting programs, see how efforts align to strategic objectives, and better understand where to allocate scarce resources. For the purposes of STEPS reporting, **a program is a functional unit of the college that uses or creates resources towards a common purpose and which can engage in self study**—that's a flexible definition that could apply to multiple levels of organization, and even overlapping functional areas.

For the most part, a STEPS reporting program will be a department, led by a director or a chair. The following table shows WWCC's default programs by division. In some cases, programs might more meaningfully be grouped together for reporting purposes—like all agriculture instructional programs—or broken apart—like having recruitment & hiring and professional development areas report separately instead of one Human Resources report. Program leaders should work with their VP and division leaders to identify how programs should report.

Division (VP or higher)	Dept. Responsible for STEPS report
Office of President	Foundation
	Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
	Marketing, Communications & Events
Planning, Effectiveness, and Economic Development	Institutional Research & Effectiveness

Human Resources	Human Resources
Administrative Services	Accounting
	Budget
	Payroll
	Purchasing
	Technology Services (AKA IT)
	Custodial
	Maintenance
Student Services	Grounds
	Clarkston Campus
	Outreach
	Advising/Navigators
	Running Start
	Funders (WES)
	TRIO
	Financial Aid
	Registration
	Enrollment Strategies
	Athletics
	Safety & Security
	Student Life
	Water & Environmental Center
Instruction	Library
	Center for Integrated Learning
	Tutoring
	Transitional Studies
	Testing
	Continuing & Community Education
	First Year Experience (FYE)
	College in the High School
	CTE Dual Credit
	Open Doors
	Arts & Humanities
	Physical, Life & Sport Sciences
	Social Sciences
	Math
	Education
	Nursing
	Allied Health
	Enology & Viticulture

	Culinary Arts
	Automotive Repair
	Diesel
	John Deere
	Energy Systems
	Welding
	Commercial Driver's License (CDL)
	Ag Business
	Animal Science
	Agriculture Systems
	Plant & Soil Science
	Turf Management
	Irrigation
	Cosmetology & Barbering
	Computer Science
	Early Childhood Education
	Business
	Human & Social Services
	Criminal Justice
	Corrections Education
	ANR Center of Excellence

THE PROCESS

REPORTING

Programs should visit the [STEPS webpage](#) for templates and information early in fall term. Templates are Word documents and can be edited to provide the requested information, then saved as a PDF for submission via the [STEPS Upload Form](#), also located via the STEPS webpage. All STEPS forms should be submitted no later than the last Friday in December.

WWCC Institutional Research & Effectiveness (IRE) is available to provide support for STEPS reporters and will provide workshops and individual consultations as needed. Reporters should also work closely with their respective vice presidents and other division leaders. Division leaders should provide time and support for STEPS reporting. If programs are accountable to external standards, like separate accreditation, they should use those standards to guide their reporting. In most cases, the STEPS standards are flexible enough to accommodate such needs. If reporters encounter problems, please inform IRE or IEC.

REVIEW

After submission, members of IEC will review the STEPS report and assess each section according to the standards presented in this guidebook (see *Standards*). The purpose of review is to offer constructive feedback to program personnel and college leadership. Reviewers should assess to what extent programs under review meet the STEPS standards, using the assessment criteria as described. Criteria are designed to be evaluated based on their level of

compliance. The assessment scale broadly estimates the extent to which a given practice is in compliance with a given standard. Reviewers will determine for each section and subsection reported whether it is: compliant, not compliant, insufficient evidence, or under rare circumstances not applicable. There is no scoring system of compliance and programs are not rated against each other.

Each member of IEC reviewing a program will individually determine the level of compliance for each section and subsection, then meet to discuss their review as a group. Individuals will document their reasoning and evidence for their determination. The review team will then discuss evaluations collectively and assign a final assessment. The team should discuss each section to assure that all aspects of the program presented were given fair and impartial consideration prior to a final collective judgement. Persistent disagreements over performance ratings may be noted and left undetermined.

In determining the level of compliance, reviewers should consider:

- Were all materials described in the STEPS report provided and made available for review? If not, could they be provided?
- Was the evidence provided by the reporters sufficient to make a determination?
- What are the areas of strength? What are the areas of concern or which could be improved?
- Did each member of the review team understand each Standard and its evaluation criteria? Criteria are provided in this guidebook, but additional guidance can be found in the CAS General Education standards.
- Have all members of the review team participated? Everyone should feel empowered to share their perspectives and rationales.
- Individuals on the review team should strive to participate as fully as possible, but may sometimes have reasons to not participate—e.g., personal issues, unexpected workload increases, or personal bias, such as being a STEPS reporter for a program under review. In those cases, the team should decide how to distribute the work effectively.
- If the group cannot reach a consensus, they should note that in their review and discuss the matter with the program reporters.

POST-REVIEW

After collective review, IEC will meet with program personnel to discuss the evaluation and present their reasoning, and any recommendations for improvement. This is designed to be a constructive discussion that can lead to identifying steps for improvement, as needed. If the review team could not reach consensus for any portion of the STEPS report, they can discuss the matter and reach one now with the program personnel.

The assessment process may identify areas where a program is not in compliance with the standards. In such cases, the review team should work with program personnel to develop an action plan to address those areas. This action plan in many ways is a revision of what the programs themselves have put forward in the STEPS report under *Standard 7: Planning & Continuous Improvement*. Programs will be asked to report on progress in their next year's STEPS report.

STANDARDS

The STEPS standards are informed by those developed by the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education, and include:

1. **Mission (A)**
2. **Organizational Structure and Objectives (A)**
3. **Student Learning, Development, and Success (I)** (optional for N)
4. Interpreting Information (A)
5. Human Resources (A)
6. Finances & Other Resources (A)
7. **Planning & Continuous Improvement (A)**

CAS identifies [twelve general standards](#) that can be understood as essential practices to enact good work within institutions of higher education and are informed by practice and applicable research. Not all CAS standards apply to the WWCC context, while others have been simplified, adjusted, or integrated into other standards. For example, the CAS standard for Assessment mostly aligns with the STEPS standards for Interpreting Information and Planning & Continuing Improvement, but elements are included in other standards as appropriate. Elements of the CAS standard for Access, Diversity, Equity, Inclusions, and Justice are found throughout STEPS.

All programs at the college are responsible for meeting the STEPS standards as a set, but not all standards need to be addressed on an annual basis. The STEPS annual report will explicitly ask questions to help assess all programs' compliance with Standards 1, 2, and 7 and instructional programs' compliance with Standard 3 (marked in the list above). Each standard is marked in parentheses to indicate if they are applicable to **(I)**nstructional programs, **(N)**oninstructional programs, or **(A)**ll programs. All applicable standards should be addressed in a self-reflective narrative following a multiyear cycle yet to be determined.

STANDARD 1: MISSION (A)

(A)ll programs to address annually.

Every program must have a mission statement that is consistent with the mission of the area, division, institution, and any applicable professional standards.

A mission statement is typically 1-2 sentences that describes what the program does. It describes how the program helps fulfill the college's mission, which will lead to the realization of the college's vision. A well-crafted mission statement should align with the mission of the college, and reference student learning, development, and success.

Program leads should work collaboratively with faculty and/or staff as well as division leadership to develop or review and update the mission statement on a regular basis. Considerations when developing or reviewing a mission statement:

- Is the mission statement consistent with that of the institution and with professional standards?
- To what extent is the mission appropriate for and inclusive of a diverse student population, and does it reference student learning, development, and success?
- How are the mission and outcomes developed, disseminated, implemented, and regularly reviewed?
- Who benefits from the program or services offered?

- How does the program advance its mission, and what is the role of the program or service with respect to supporting students, its area, division, and the college as a whole?
- What is the role of the program with respect to mission fulfillment?

Example: WWCC Institutional Research & Effectiveness supports the college's mission and commitment to student learning and success by providing quality, accessible, reliable, and relevant information to facilitate decision-making and planning processes, enhance institutional effectiveness, and promote a culture of evidence-based inquiry.

STANDARD 2: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND OBJECTIVES (A)

(A) All programs to address annually.

2.1 STRUCTURE AND OBJECTIVES

This section explains how the program or service is structured and what it does. It further outlines activities, services, and/or resources provided by the functional area, including objectives that inform purpose and allow evaluation of performance.

- Core activities are those activities or functions necessary for the program to do on a regular basis. For Financial Aid, that might be something like the processing of FAFSA submissions to determine the eligibility of students for aid. For the Chemistry department, that might be providing quality instruction in Chemistry for students preparing for their AA/S. Instructional programs should list which credentials (certificates, degrees, BAS) are offered.
- The program or service should be guided by a set of written objectives that are directly related to the stated mission. These are neither student learning outcomes nor core activities, but what other end-states you wish to realize (e.g., develop new credential or course offerings, or have all students in need of funding fully funded so they pursue their educational goals—note how the latter relates to the example core activity above, but now sets a desired outcome from that activity).
- Objectives must be aligned with the college's mission and/or institutional priorities and expectations of the program or service. They can be strategic goals from a current plan, or more long-term objectives.
- The program or service must regularly develop, review, evaluate, and revise its objectives.
- The program or service must communicate objectives and progress toward achievement to appropriate constituents.

In describing how the program is organized, explain who reports to whom and how many positions and full-time equivalent staff are included (1 full-time employee = 1.0 FTE; 1 half-time employee = 0.5 FTE). Organizational charts may be linked or submitted along with the STEPS report, if available. For example, 3 FT faculty (3 FTE) and 1 PT (0.5 FTE) report to the chair, Mr. Boss (1 FTE), who reports to the Dean, Dr. Boss (1 FTE), who reports to the VPI. Org chart available: <https://www.wwcc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Instruction-Overview-2022-23.pdf>

2.2 PUBLISHED MATERIALS

The program or service must provide relevant information about its mission and goals, the programs, services, and resources it provides. This information, whether promotional or descriptive, must be accurate and free of deception and misrepresentation.

Published materials may include information in the college's Course Catalog, a website, program maps, course syllabi, promotional material like fliers or posters, among other possibilities. For each, programs will be asked to identify the date the published material was last reviewed or updated, the location (could be a physical location, a URL, if online, or a file path if saved in the shared folder system), and the person or persons responsible for updates.

If the program has no published materials, reporters should indicate that the section is not applicable.

STANDARD 3: STUDENT LEARNING, DEVELOPMENT, AND SUCCESS (I) (Optional for N)

All (I)instructional programs to address annually. Optional for (N)oninstructional programs.

NOTE: The STEPS annual report will ask all programs to provide a summary of the extent to which they feel they are meeting the standards below, and any thoughts or plans they have for the future, aligning learning outcomes, etc. Programs should go into more detail in their multiyear cycle narratives, addressing the different levels of learning outcomes and how they are using the results of analyses to inform actions.

Each program or service should contribute to student learning and development, including both curricular and extra-curricular experiences, and to students' progression and timely completion of educational goals, as well as help students prepare for their careers and meaningful contributions to society. Programs should work with the institution to identify relevant and desirable student learning and development outcomes, and implement strategies and tactics that lead to student success in achieving these outcomes. While student learning is the explicit goal of instructional programs, all programs and services at the college contribute to student learning in some way.

Student learning outcomes should specify the knowledge, skills, and abilities students will develop through their studies, activities, and experiences in the college. Outcomes must be clearly stated, publicly disseminated, and measured. Outcomes should be defined at various levels by each program or service according to its structure and mission.

Every program or service area in the college contributes to students' development of the Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs), which are: Community Engagement, Information Literacy and Technology, Communication, and Critical Thinking. The outcomes at each subsequent level should align such that it is possible to identify how each program or service contributes to ILOs and to ensure sufficient opportunity for students to develop and demonstrate their achievement.

The questions below highlight considerations for reviewing and updating learning outcomes, program and course content, and activities and experiences throughout this section.

- Does the program/service contribute to students' progression toward timely completion of educational goals?
- Is the program/service systematically reviewed for relevance and applicability?

- Are learning outcomes of the appropriate breadth, depth, and sequencing? (Review prerequisites in the case of instructional programs.)
- Is the program content consistent with recognized fields of study? (I)
- Is there appropriate rigor in student learning outcomes leading to college-level credentials in programs of study? (I)

3.1.A PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Each program or service with direct student interaction should have student learning outcomes, and these reflect the shared learning developed through the various credentials that an instructional program offers, or the various activities and services provided in the case of non-instructional programs. Program outcomes, including the date of last review and any changes made at that time, should match those included in any applicable published materials (see 2.1: *Published Materials*).

3.1.B CREDENTIAL OUTCOMES

Each instructional program should have outcomes for every credential offered, whether as a certificate or degree. Credentials typically (though not always) include more than a single course because the sequence or combination of courses integrates and synthesizes learning into a culminating set of outcomes. Credential outcomes, including the date of last review and any changes made at that time, should match those included in any applicable published materials (see 2.1: *Published Materials*) as approved by Curriculum Council.

3.1.C COURSE/ACTIVITY OUTCOMES AND CONTENT REVIEW

All programs and services with direct student interaction should specify outcomes at the foundational level, that is for each course and each co-curricular or extracurricular activity offered. Students develop specific knowledge and skills through these learning experiences, both in and beyond the classroom, whether the duration is a day, a week, a quarter, or even a longer period.

Instructional programs should work collaboratively with faculty, staff, and advisory councils to review and update course outcomes to ensure relevance and alignment to industry, professional, or transfer requirements. Non-instructional programs and services should review whether current activities and experiences serve students' development of the outcomes identified.

STANDARD 4: INTERPRETING INFORMATION (A)

(A) *II* programs to address in multiyear cycle review.

Each program must use information from a variety of sources to make decisions, understand how well it is fulfilling its mission, and inform improvement efforts.

4.1 GATHERING AND INTERPRETING EVIDENCE

Programs are asked to explain how they regularly gather and interpret evidence related to student success and other programmatic objectives, identifying their data sources. For example, the program may use a survey to assess how well they served students, or consult a custom report or PS Query. For example, Institutional Research & Effectiveness may review how many research request tickets are opened per month, the average number of

days taken to fulfill those requests, and the level of satisfaction requestors indicated in IRE's follow-up, quality assurance and improvement survey.

4.2 COURSE EVIDENCE

Instructional programs should describe their process and results of analyzing student enrollment and student outcomes overall and for individual courses as makes sense. In doing so, programs should disaggregate those data in ways that are meaningful, provided data availability. Relevant demographics for disaggregation may include sex/gender, age, first-generation status, and race/ethnicity, among others. Course characteristics may include subject/discipline, location, mode of delivery (e.g., face-to-face, hybrid, fully online), and time of day, among others.

WWCC Institutional Research & Effectiveness (IRE) provides tools and analyses useful for addressing this standard; however, programs are not constrained to their use. The [State Board for Community and Technical Colleges](#) publishes many [reports](#) on WWCC and the CTC system, including the [First-Time Entering Student Outcomes](#) and the [First-time Entering Baccalaureate Outcomes](#) dashboards (both accessible only from a college computer). Programs should note what source(s) they've used for analysis. If reporters need additional information, they can request it from IRE by completing their [Research Request Form](#).

Programs should analyze available information on course and program enrollment, student course outcomes (e.g., course persistence, success, and DFW rates), and overall program completion within two and three years—the latter is required of workforce programs and optional for arts & sciences, as workforce programs administer most of their students' coursework and supports, whereas academic transfer students take courses from multiple program areas and make use of a wide variety of student supports. Any one program, therefore, has less of a direct effect on students' eventual success. Arts & sciences programs should feel free to comment on any analysis they have made of their students' success rates, but are not required to do so.

STANDARD 5: HUMAN RESOURCES (A)

(A) All programs to address in [multiyear cycle review](#).

Programs must have staffing levels necessary to achieve its mission and goals and be staffed by individuals qualified to do so. Personnel include full-time and part-time faculty, staff, administrators, and paraprofessionals (e.g., student employees, interns, volunteers, etc.).

STANDARD 6: FINANCES & OTHER RESOURCES (A)

(A) All programs to address in [multiyear cycle review](#).

Programs must have the funding, informational technology, and infrastructural resources, knowledge, and support necessary to accomplish their mission and goals.

6.1 BUDGET

The program should determine with administrative leadership what funding is necessary, using a budget as a planning tool. Programs should be able to identify what funds they have available, track spending, determine what resources to (re)allocate to meet its needs and support student success.

6.2 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The program should manage funds in accordance with established governmental laws and institutional policies, procedures, and guidelines. Programs should demonstrate responsible stewardship and use of fiscal resources. To do so, programs must be provided with the institutional and financial resources to assist with professional development of personnel.

6.3 TECHNOLOGY

The program should have current technology to support the achievement of its mission and goals, and ensure that personnel have access to training and support for its use. The program should incorporate accessibility features into technology-based programs and services, and must update websites that provide information to all constituents in accessible formats.

6.4 FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

The program's facilities should be located in suitable spaces designed to support its mission and goals, and should allow for the engagement of various constituents, promote learning, and provide accessible safe spaces. Facilities should be designed to protect the security and privacy of records and ensure the confidentiality of sensitive information and conversations. Personnel should have equipped and well-maintained workspaces designed to support their work.

STANDARD 7: PLANNING & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT (A)

(A) All programs to address annually.

Programs should be able to develop plans, goals, and outcomes based on sound information and assess their progress. Identify areas of strength/accomplishments and opportunities for improvement. Consider how the program is working towards improving outcomes for various student populations, as evident in your analysis of disaggregated student information in *Standard 3: Student Learning, Development, and Success*, if appropriate. Include a plan for improvement and any financial, material, and/or staffing resources required to implement the plan.

This is an holistic plan given all the information provided in the STEPS report. In making a plan, programs should consider:

- What will your program do in the coming year?
- How long will the plan take, and how will you measure success?
- What additional resources will you need to make your efforts successful?
- How will you ensure access to resources and services in a way that is responsive to the physical, cultural, and socioeconomic needs of all constituents?
- If applicable, describe how the program considers and responds to the needs of all students when developing methods to deliver instruction, services, and resources, including the needs of online students.
- Describe how the program addresses the characteristics and needs of diverse constituents when establishing and implementing culturally relevant and inclusive content, services, policies, procedures, and practices.

If this is not a program's initial STEPS report, provide updates and/or revisions on any previous plans.