



Open Pathway Quality Initiative Proposal

Institutional Template

The enclosed Quality Initiative Proposal represents the work that the institution will undertake to fulfill the quality improvement requirements of the Open Pathway.

March 8, 2022

Signature of Institution's President or Chancellor

Date

President Clifton M. Smart III

Printed/Typed Name and Title

Missouri State University

Name of Institution

Springfield, MO

City and State

The institution completes the Quality Initiative Proposal by responding to the questions in each category of the template. Proposals should be no more than 4,500 words. The institution may choose to submit a brief implementation plan or supplemental charts or graphs as appendices to the template. The Quality Initiative Proposal will be accepted beginning September 1 of Year 5. It is due no later than June 1 of Year 7.

Submit the proposal as a PDF file to hlcommission.org/upload. Select "Pathways/Quality Initiative" from the list of submission options to ensure the institution's materials are sent to the correct HLC staff member. Submission file names should utilize the following format: QIProposal[InstitutionName][State].pdf (e.g., QIProposalNoNameUniversityMN.pdf). The file name must include the institution's name (or an identifiable portion thereof) and state.

Overview of the Quality Initiative

1. Provide a title and brief description of the Quality Initiative. Explain whether the initiative will begin and be completed during the Quality Initiative period or if it is part of work already in progress or will achieve a key milestone in the work of a longer initiative.

Title: Assessing Student Learning in Graduate and Professional Doctorate Programs

Missouri State’s Quality Initiative Project will focus on assessing student learning in graduate programs through an annual assessment workshop that includes students, participant stipends, and follow-up. Faculty in graduate programs self-select a team of at least three faculty and one student. The team will meet with assessment consultants prior to the first meeting to confirm a focus for the workshop, including reviewing student learning outcomes, review course titles and descriptions (an SGA request), review assessment of student learning data alongside students, review culminating projects (comprehensive exams, portfolios, theses, or seminar papers), and develop an assessment plan.

A face-to-face graduate-level workshop was planned for three days in May 2020. Due to the pandemic, the workshop took place virtually. The virtual workshop worked as well as the face-to-face and the Office of Assessment received positive feedback. The virtual workshop necessitated a change in the delivery and design of the workshop. For example, time was added for program teams to meet with a consultants from the Office of Assessment prior to the first virtual meeting. Time was embedded for teams to meet in breakout rooms, and consultants and the Director of Assessment were able to move from group to group to consult. More flexibility was created in the schedule for teams to set up meeting times.

The Quality Initiative will be successful if the institution achieves a 50% participation rate among graduate programs and professional doctorate-level programs by 2025, when the university has its HLC visit. The project will be completed within the QIP period and will continue beyond 2025 as part of a system of continuous improvement.

At the completion of this current project, Missouri State will have established long-running assessment of student learning workshops from undergraduate to graduate to professional doctorate levels that include a high level of stakeholder involvement with faculty and—just as importantly—student participation and engagement.

Sufficiency of the Initiative’s Scope and Significance

2. Explain why the proposed initiative is relevant and significant for the institution.

Missouri State has had several significant and historical changes in the past few years relevant to the focus of the QIP on assessment in graduate programs.

In 2021, Missouri State University reached its highest enrollment for graduate programs (4,000+) in the history of the university. In 2018, MSU changed from the Carnegie Classification of *M1: Master’s Colleges and Universities—Larger Programs* to the *Doctoral/Professional Universities (D/PU)* classification. In late 2021, the State of Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education approved a revision to the university’s mission include language on this change. Missouri State will be submitting a change to HLC in 2022.

3. Explain the intended impact of the initiative on the institution and its academic quality.

The intended impact is to develop (for new programs), refine (for existing programs), and improve (all programs) assessment of student learning at the graduate level. The way the workshops are designed will build community and create opportunities for faculty and students to collaborate on assessment processes.

Assessment of student learning is an area that always needs attention and will always improve academic quality.

Clarity of the Initiative's Purpose

4. Describe the purposes and goals for the initiative.

The **purpose** of this initiative is to maintain our existing culture of assessment and expand into graduate programs as the institution has done in undergraduate programs. The **goals** are as follows:

1. By 2025, at least 50% of graduate programs will participate in the QIP.
2. 100% of participant programs will review student learning outcomes.
3. 85% of participant programs will agree/strongly agree that their team made progress in improving assessment in their discipline.
4. Faculty learn how to assess student learning.

5. Select up to three main topics that will be addressed by the initiative.

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|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advising | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Improvement |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assessment | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Retention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civic Engagement | <input type="checkbox"/> Online Learning | <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum | <input type="checkbox"/> Persistence and Completion | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Student Learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Student Success |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engagement | <input type="checkbox"/> Program Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching/Pedagogy |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Faculty Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Program Evaluation | <input type="checkbox"/> Underserved Populations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> First-Year Programs | | <input type="checkbox"/> Workforce |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Education | | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

6. Describe how the institution will evaluate progress, make adjustments and determine what has been accomplished.

Evaluating Progress

Progress is evaluated through the following measures:

1. Consultants review daily and comprehensive workshop feedback from participants.
2. Participants share review of learning outcomes and plans for change, if any, to those outcomes.
3. Participants share plans to make change in their programs and share data used to drive that decision.
4. Consultants follow up with participant teams at set intervals to evaluate progress on stated changes.
5. Consultants administer and monitor assessment grants for participants to support assessment efforts begun in the workshop.

6. Consultants evaluate number of participants and program participants to monitor progress towards QIP goal 1.

Making Adjustments

Real-time feedback encourages flexibility in the workshop structure. Consultants will evaluate daily and comprehensive feedback and respond to participant needs. Using these principles, here are the adjustments made since the pilot:

- Changed recruiting based on attendance. For example, one college has yet to participate, so Assessment staff actively worked with the Dean, Assessment Council liaison, and faculty in that college.
- Increased efforts to encourage recruitment of students in the 2nd year after seeing the impact of graduate student participation.
- Based on the feedback, Assessment staff are considering an expanded timeframe for consultation and independent team work time from 10 days to three weeks.
- Assessment Consultants added more consultations with teams after Year 1 and will continue to do so.
- Assessment Consultants will meet with teams 6 months following the workshop to review team accomplishments on their respective projects.

Determining Accomplishments

Accomplishments are determined by reviewing team presentations, follow-up consultations, and reviewing workshop evaluations as outlined below:

1. Each program/team will develop a PowerPoint to share with the other programs that includes the following information:
 - a. time, date, and attendance at the workshop; data discussed, and conclusion reached; items chosen for action; follow-up plans and actions; and recommendations for items that need action at higher levels than the department (Walvoord, 2010).
2. The Consultants will collect daily formative feedback and review each day. The Consultants make adjustments and are explicit in tying the changes to the workshop feedback provided by participants.
3. Assessment consultants in the Office of Assessment meet one on one with the group to evaluate and support their projects.
4. In the pilot, the Assessment Office received the following feedback:
 - a. 100% of respondents said the workshop accomplished its goal of incentivizing assessment and allowing time to work with colleagues and students on an assessment project.
 - b. 100% of respondents said they reviewed their student learning outcomes.
 - c. 64% of respondents said they were going to make a change to their learning outcomes based on what they saw. Another 21% said they might.
 - d. 95% “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that their team made progress toward improving assessment in their discipline.
 - e. 90% said they would recommend participating in this workshop to a colleague.

Evidence of Commitment to and Capacity for Accomplishing the Initiative

7. Describe the level of support for the initiative by internal or external stakeholders.

The institution's Assessment Team has a high level of support from faculty, students, departments, colleges, Office of the Provost, and the Board of Governors. This project is supported by faculty members on Assessment Council, past attendees, Graduate College, Deans, and department heads of past attendees. In addition, academic programs may choose to implement the successful practices into their annual cycles of review.

8. Identify the groups and individuals that will lead or be directly involved in implementing the initiative.

This proposal has been reviewed by the HLC Steering Committee, the academic leadership council (provost and deans), and the Assessment Council. The initiative will be led by the provost and the Associate Provost for Public Affairs and Assessment with the help of the Assessment Council. The HLC Steering Committee will monitor progress and make sure everyone has the instructions needed to write the final Quality Initiative report.

The workshop is coordinated by the Office of Assessment who report to the Office of the Provost. The Associate Provost and two assessment consultants work with the following people to implement the initiative:

- The Deans and Associate Deans who oversee graduate programs for the university's seven colleges.
- Academic Leadership Council
- The Assessment Council, which includes representatives from all colleges. These faculty representatives serve as liaisons between Assessment and their respective academic areas.
- Faculty—coordinators require a minimum of three to five faculty to attend along with one graduate student. The institution would like to reach a tipping point and have enough faculty who participate who can securely and confidently return to their colleagues and present on changes to programs. Faculty develop curriculum and assessment. Missouri State is creating a space for this work to happen and providing a modest financial incentive.
- Students, who are recruited by faculty from their programs.
- The HLC Steering Committee will monitor progress and make sure everyone has the instructions needed to write the final Quality Initiative report.

9. List the human, financial, technological and other resources that the institution has committed to this initiative.

Human Resources

As listed above, the University has committed a great deal of human resources to this initiative:

- Office of Assessment which includes Assessment Consultants, Graduate Assistants, Program Manager, and Executive Assistant
- Office of the Provost

- The Associate Provost for Public Affairs and Assessment
- Assessment Council
- Faculty
- Graduate students
- Deans and Associate Deans

Financial Resources

Since 2014, the Provost has budgeted funds to support faculty stipends and student employee wages for participation in assessment projects. In 2020, when Missouri State first held a graduate-focused assessment workshop, the Provost continued to provide financial support to allow for a faculty participant stipend (\$500-600), with student participants paid \$11-\$12 an hour for a minimum of 10 hours to work with faculty.

An average workshop with 40 faculty and 8 graduate student participants requires \$36,000 on the part of the university for stipends, fringe, and student payment.

Technological Resources

- Zoom license
- PowerPoint Live captioning for hearing-impaired participants
- SharePoint
- University website (presentations are uploaded to the Assessment web page)

Appropriateness of the Timeline for the Initiative

(The institution may include a brief implementation or action plan.)

10. Describe the primary activities of the initiative and timeline for implementing them.

QIP Timeline

The proposed QIP serves as an opportunity for graduate and professional doctoral programs to develop a cycle of assessment at an annual meeting of faculty and students to review evidence of student learning, an opportunity to discuss strengths and weaknesses in student learning, and document programmatic change based on those discussions to improve student learning. Changes are reported annually to the Deans and the Provost. The following 3-year cycle expounds on this process of continuous improvement.

Timeline	Initiative	Resources
2022-2023	<p>Pre-workshop: Cohort 1 teams (consisting of faculty and graduate students) are recruited; Student learning outcomes survey; Weekly team meetings to review direct evidence of student learning</p> <p>Workshop: Teams develop an assessment action plan; Teams report on action plan to fellow</p>	<p>Consultations with the Office of Assessment</p> <p>Assessment Grant to assist with sustainability</p> <p>Stipends for teams</p> <p>Hourly pay for student participants</p>

	<p>participants and the Office of Assessment</p> <p>After Workshop: Teams undertake the process of making changes determined in the workshop; Survey students; Write a reflection of the assessment process; Present to campus-wide Faculty Showcase; departmental annual reports include a question about changes made to programs based on direct evidence of student learning</p>	<p>Survey development assistance from the Office of Assessment</p> <p>Institutional and college investment in curricular reform based on workshop action plan</p>
2023-2024	<p>Recruit Cohort 2 of new graduate programs who will complete the cycle from year 1; Cohort one will return and report on impact to student learning;</p>	<p>Continued resources from previous year</p>
2024-2025	<p>Recruit Cohort 3 of graduate programs who will complete the workshop cycle; Cohort 2 will return and report on impact to student learning; Review entire project and write a comprehensive report of initiative: 1) What was accomplished and learned? 2) How will we best apply the assessment process to other learning outcomes? 3) How will other academic programs incorporate the best of these practices?</p>	<p>Continued resources from previous year</p>

Institutional Contact for Quality Initiative Proposal

Include the name(s) of the primary contact(s) for the Quality Initiative.

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