

Assessment at University of the Cumberlands: Information for Students

What is assessment?

University of the Cumberlands is committed to providing students with an excellent education. Assessment is the processing of measuring the impact that education has on students. This means that we assess our academic programs based not only on what faculty teach, but on what students learn.

We want to be able to demonstrate that we are making a difference in your lives. To demonstrate that University of the Cumberlands creates change and growth for you, we have developed a number of methods to assess your progress. Because it is important for you, your parents, prospective employers, and the community to see the extent of your progress, we encourage you to participate in assessment activities offered by the University.

Assessment gives University of the Cumberlands two kinds of information. First, it lets us demonstrate how good a Cumberland education really is. Second, it helps us to identify areas of improvement, so we can constantly improve our programs.

How do students participate in assessment?

To encourage your participation in assessment activities, we may invite you to attend focus groups, to complete tests, to develop portfolios of your work, to complete surveys, or to participate in a number of other activities. Many of the assessment activities that you will participate in will focus on the attitudes, skills, and behaviors you learned from general education courses and from participating in co-curricular activities. Other assessment activities will be related to your major field of study. These activities will enable faculty to assess how well they are doing in helping you understand the core concepts and develop the essential skills in your major.

Some of the assessment activities you are likely to complete include:

- ▶ First year students: Experiences questionnaire, New Student Survey, Student Opinion Survey, and a standardized critical

thinking and Gen Ed measures.

- ▶ Second year students: Programmatic assessment activities vary by department.
- ▶ Third year students: Standardized critical thinking and Gen Ed measures. Programmatic assessment activities vary by department.
- ▶ Fourth year students: Graduating Student Survey. Programmatic assessment activities vary by department.
- ▶ Throughout your college career: Health behavior survey, involvement surveys, and advising surveys.
- ▶ After you graduate: Occasional alumni surveys and interviews.

How do students benefit from assessment?

In many instances, assessment is your chance to tell us how we are doing. We value your opinion and will use your feedback to enrich Cumberland's learning environment for future Patriots. In many cases, we will share with you the results of assessment activities in which you participate. Assessment activities in your major field of study often provide you with feedback about your strengths and weaknesses, which enables you and your professors to celebrate your strengths and improve your weaknesses. Awareness of your own capabilities is an important ingredient for success both in college and after graduation.

Assessment activities are intended to provide useful information to faculty, staff, and administrators. This information helps us improve the learning environment for you. For example, Cumberland's has been conducting an assessment of the General Education curriculum and as a result Music removed MUSC 235 *Survey of Music Literature* from the GE curriculum and replaced it with MUSC 335 *World Music* to add diversity to the General Education curriculum.

How does the University use assessment information?

Your participation in assessment activities is very important to the University. Many assessment activities enable us to measure your progress from your first year to your fourth year, which helps us determine how we are influencing your growth. Your participation in assessment activities enables you to demonstrate how your skills and abilities have grown during college. For example, surveying alumni helps us learn how effective the University is at preparing students for lives and careers after college.

Some assessment activities will enable us to compare University of the Cumberlands students to students from other colleges and universities. We will be able to improve programs and make changes based on your feedback and performance on various assessment activities.

Your responses to tests and surveys are confidential. Before administering an assessment activity, we will tell you how the results will be used so that you understand that the information will never be used in a way you were not anticipating. We report assessment results as summaries of all students' responses. Individual students' survey responses or test results will never be reported inappropriately.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

If you have questions about assessment activities or if you would like additional information about University of the Cumberlands' assessment plan, please contact Susan Weaver at 539-4125 or email Susan.Weaver@ucumberlands.edu.