

Policies and Procedures of the Institutional Effectiveness Unit



Developed by Institutional Effectiveness in the Office of Analytics and Institutional Effectiveness at Virginia Tech.

Overview

Institutional Effectiveness (IE) is here to support evidence-based decision-making and to foster continuous improvement within the Virginia Tech community. The general aim of this policy document is to help the university community understand what it can expect from our unit as we work together to reach our goals.

Our unit's initiatives include:

- Academic Program and Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Assessment
- Administrative Unit Assessment,
- Academic Program Review,
- Pathways General Education Assessment,
- The Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) Survey,
- Survey Research

These initiatives are joint efforts between our unit and the campus community.

Our Mission

The mission of IE in the Office of Analytics & Institutional Effectiveness (AIE) is to facilitate a culture of continuous improvement and advance excellence at Virginia Tech. We accomplish this through the design and promotion of assessment and planning processes. Through these efforts and utilizing analytics to visualize institutional effectiveness data, we support evidence-based decision-making to enhance learning and the student experience.

Our Vision

The vision for IE is to lead the field by designing and implementing innovative ways to collect, report, and present actionable assessment data.

Accreditation Standards Related to Institutional Effectiveness and Continuous Improvement

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on College

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is the regional accrediting body for Virginia Tech. There are over 800 institutions of higher education represented in the SACSCOC region. To maintain accreditation, Virginia Tech must demonstrate compliance on standards outlined in the *Principles of Accreditation*.

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) is the coordinating body for higher education in the state of Virginia. SCHEV's *Policy on Student Learning Assessment and Quality in Undergraduate Education*

identifies four main competency areas to be assessed by all public institutions in the Commonwealth: Critical Thinking, Written Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, and Civic Engagement. In addition, each institution chooses two additional competencies to assess that are reflective of its institutional priorities. For Virginia Tech, the two areas chosen are Scientific Reasoning and Critique and Practice in Design and the Arts. SCHEV requires institutions to submit plans outlining the assessment schedule for each competency, specific outcomes for each, and appropriate measures. Institutions are required to report findings for each of the competencies and make those findings publicly available.

Responsibilities of Institutional Effectiveness, Office Analytics & Institutional Effectiveness

Academic Program and Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Assessment

APA is the cornerstone of the university's continuous improvement process and provides many benefits (e.g., identify program strengths, encourage collaboration, and encourage curriculum review). The APA process assists the university in documenting its compliance with SACSCOC's Principles of Accreditation Standards 8.1 and 8.2.4 IE is here to facilitate this process for undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs as well as post-baccalaureate certificates. Assessment professionals are available to support efforts regarding the development of a program's outcomes, measures, and targets. In addition, we are also available to assist in the interpretation of findings and in the development of potential action plans.

IE's first points of contact for the APA process are college deans and department chairs. Reminders regarding the **June 30** reporting deadline will be sent to these individuals periodically throughout the year. Any academic program or post-baccalaureate certificate that has not completed its assessment report by the deadline will be contacted by our unit periodically starting on **July 15 until** reports are received. Academic programs and post-baccalaureate certificates that submitted reports on time will receive formative feedback from IE by **September 15**. Assessment professionals from our unit are available to meet with academic degree and post-baccalaureate certificate programs to help facilitate successful completion of the assessment report.

Institutional Effectiveness is responsible for:

- Developing and distributing the reporting templates for both academic programs and post-baccalaureate certificates. Reporting templates can also be found on the IE website.
- Providing administrative support as needed for academic programs and post-baccalaureate certificates as well as sending reminders and other resources.
- Tracking program compliance with the annual APA process.

IE is not responsible for completing the APA reports for academic programs or certificates.

Administrative Unit Assessment (AUA)

Virginia Tech's AUA is the process by which administrative offices engage in and document cycles of continuous improvement. AUA assists the university in documenting compliance with SACSCOC's Principles of Accreditation Standards 7.3 and 8.2.c. IE is here to help facilitate the assessment process for administrative units by assisting units

in determining their outcomes, measures, targets, and, subsequently, interpreting their findings and developing action plans.

The Office of the President, as well as all deans, vice presidents, and vice provosts are expected to submit an annual administrative unit assessment report by **September 1** to IE. In addition, all units that are comprised of more than one employee AND report directly to a vice president or vice provost are expected to submit an annual AUA report.

Any administrative unit that has not completed its assessment report(s) will be contacted by our unit periodically starting **September 9** until reports are received. Administrative units that submitted reports on time will receive formative feedback from IE by **November 15**. Assessment professionals from our unit are available to meet with administrative units to help facilitate the successful completion of the assessment report.

Institutional Effectiveness is responsible for:

- Developing and distributing the AUA reporting template. Reporting templates can be found on the IE website.
- Providing administrative support as needed for administrative units as well as sending reminders and other resources.
- Tracking program compliance with the annual AUA process.

IE is not responsible for completing the assessment report for administrative units.

Academic Program Review (APR)

Virginia Tech's APR process provides an opportunity for academic departments, schools, and programs to rigorously and comprehensively evaluate their accomplishments, develop a vision for the future, and create specific plans to accomplish this vision. The APR process assists the university in documenting its compliance with SACSCOC's Principles of Accreditation Standards 7.1 and 8.2. Departments, schools, and programs participate in APR once every 5 or 6 years. The review schedule is set in collaboration with the college deans and may vary slightly to avoid conflicts with discipline-related requirements.

Institutional Effectiveness is responsible for:

- Providing support and information about the APR process to department chairs/heads, school directors, and program directors.
- Coordinating with other units in the Office of Analytics & Institutional Effectiveness to compile necessary data for department, school, and program leaders.
- Inviting and training peer reviewers, finalizing peer review teams, scheduling meetings, and sharing self-study reports with review teams.
- Facilitating peer review team meetings, assisting teams in completing necessary reports, sending final reports to the respective college dean, and archiving all APR-related materials.

Pathways General Education Program (Pathways)

Virginia Tech's current general education program, Pathways, was implemented in Fall 2018. The curriculum includes seven core concepts and two integrative concepts. Robust assessment of the Pathways curriculum is necessary to determine program effectiveness and to identify areas for improvement. Pathways assessment reporting assists the university in documenting its compliance with SACSCOC's Principles of Accreditation Standard 8.2b and SCHEV's *Policy on Student Learning Assessment and Quality in Undergraduate Education*.

Beginning in Fall 2024, Pathways assessment will be conducted on a four-year cycle. In Year 1 (e.g., 2024-2025) and Year 2 (e.g., 2025-2026), assessment data will be collected from a representative sample of course sections each fall and spring semester. In Year 3, faculty working groups will discuss the data collected during Year 1 and Year 2 and develop recommendations for improvements to the Pathways program as needed. In Year 4, any recommended improvements will go through the university governance process as needed.

Institutional Effectiveness is responsible for:

- Identifying samples of Pathways sections that will complete Pathways assessment in Year 1 and Year 2 of the four-year assessment cycle.
- Communicating with sampled instructors, department chairs/heads, school directors, and deans.
- Providing resources and support to assist instructors with Pathways assessment.
- Receiving, tracking, de-identifying, analyzing, and aggregating Pathways assessment data.
- Creating a summary of aggregated assessment data for all Pathways student learning outcomes and concepts to be disseminated to the campus community.
- Sharing aggregated results with external stakeholders (e.g., SACSCOC and SCHEV).

Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT)

IE helps facilitate the administration of the SPOT. A third-party software system, Course Evaluations & Surveys (CES), has been the administration tool for SPOT surveys since Fall 2016. In collaboration with Information Technology Learning Systems (ITLS), our unit develops the SPOT timeline each semester. Professionals from our unit collaborate with departments' SPOT administrators to ensure there are minimal errors during each SPOT administration.

Areas of responsibility for Institutional Effectiveness regarding SPOT include:

- Troubleshooting issues with the administration of the SPOT survey for students and faculty.
- Assisting faculty with accessing their historical SPOT data if it is available.
- Adding new department/college SPOT administrators when requested.
- Removing all F* sanctioned students from the SPOT administration.
- Communicating instructions, updates, and important dates regarding the SPOT to the campus community.

More detailed information regarding this process and the roles of the unit is contained in the Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT): Policies and Procedures document, available on the SPOT webpage.

Survey Research

IE is responsible for the development and administration of the Virginia Tech Freshmen Survey, Virginia Tech Senior Survey, and the administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). All three surveys are administered to respondents via email. If necessary, IE obtains approval from Virginia Tech's Institutional Review Board prior to conducting the administration of any survey.

Institutional Effectiveness is responsible for:

- Creating university-, college-, and department-wide summary reports for the Virginia Tech Senior Survey. College reports will include comparisons with university-level data. Department reports will include comparisons with college-level and university-level data.
- Creating and posting the university-level narrative summary of Virginia Tech Senior Survey results to the Analytics and Institutional Effectiveness (AIE) website and distributing reports to each college/department.
- Creating and posting university-level narrative summaries and infographics for the Virginia Tech Freshmen Survey and NSSE survey to the AIE website.
- Distributing NSSE college-level reports.

Responsibilities of Faculty and Departments

Academic Program and Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Assessment (APA)

APA reporting is the responsibility of academic deans and department chairs. Each academic program and post-baccalaureate certificate should report assessment findings by **June 30** of each year. Reports are submitted electronically. Both degree and certificate programs should make sure they have the correct reporting year template as it may undergo slight changes from year to year. The newest version of the reporting template is available on the IE website.

Both degree programs and post-baccalaureate certificates need to include measures and targets for each of its student learning outcomes (SLOs) and program outcomes (POs). Both degree and certificate programs need to ensure that they are measuring all of their program's outcomes **at least twice in 5 years**. For newly approved programs and post-baccalaureate certificates, the first assessment report is due the academic year following program inception.

Completing the Academic Program and Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Assessment Report

Degree programs should:

- Include 5 to 8 SLOs and 2 to 3 POs on every assessment report. The program must also include the measures and targets for every identified outcome. Those programs covered by a disciplinary-specific accrediting body might have more SLOs or POs based on the specific standards of that agency.
- Measure 2 to 3 SLOs and 1 to 2 POs each year. For any unmet target, the degree program should develop an action plan. In years when all targets are met, the report should include an action plan for at least 1 SLO.
- Include comments on previously implemented action plans. Programs should also respond to at least 1 of the general questions at the end of the reporting form.

Certificate programs should:

- Include 2 to 4 SLOs on the assessment report. Assessment reports should also include 1 to 2 POs.
- Measure at least 1 SLO and 1 PO each year. For any unmet target, the certificate program should develop an action plan.
- Include comments on previously implemented action plans. Programs should also respond to at least 1 of the general questions at the end of the reporting form.

Administrative Unit Assessment (AUA)

All senior leadership is responsible for promoting a culture of continuous improvement at the university and within their respective divisions. This includes the president, provost, vice presidents, vice provosts, and academic deans. AUA reports are due **September 1** of each year and are submitted to IE electronically. Administrative units can access the AUA reporting template online by visiting the IE website.

Completing the Administrative Unit Assessment Report

Administrative units should:

- Include 3 to 5 administrative unit outcomes (AUOs) on the assessment report. The unit should list all of its AUOs and corresponding measures and targets, even if a particular AUO was not measured during a given year.
- Measure at least 3 AUOs each year and provide findings and comments for each.
- Provide an action plan for at least one AUO, even if all AUO targets were met. This could be the AUO the unit feels it needs to focus on most during the upcoming year.
- List any and all SLOs (if applicable), their corresponding measures and targets, and provide findings and comments on any SLOs measured. Most administrative units will not have student learning outcomes.

Academic Program Review (APR)

The information below is provided to help you understand the expectations for departments, schools, and programs participating in APR. Unit leaders are responsible for conducting and completing a comprehensive self-study and participating in all aspects of the review process. A completed self-study report should be submitted to IE by the communicated deadline.

Unit leaders are also responsible for providing IE with a list of faculty members/administrators that they feel would serve as strong peer reviewers of the unit. IE invites all peer reviewers on a unit's behalf. Each peer review team consists of four faculty members/administrators from Virginia Tech and a professional from the IE unit (5 members total). If desired, units have the option for one member of the peer review team to be from an external university/organization. Responsibilities of peer reviewers are outlined in detail in their initial offer letter. Unit leaders are responsible for meeting with their peer review team to answer questions and provide additional information about their unit.

After receiving the peer review team's report, a unit may submit a written response to the report if desired. If created, this response is submitted to the IE professional who facilitated the unit's review and is archived by IE. After all APR-related documents are sent to the dean of the unit's respective academic college, unit leaders meet with the dean(s) to discuss the review process and plans for the future. Following this meeting, the dean composes a memo that documents their conversation with the unit, the unit's plans for moving forward, and the dean's expectations regarding action items to be implemented by the next APR cycle. This memo is sent to the unit and IE and then archived with the other APR documents for the unit.

Pathways to General Education Assessment (Pathways)

Virginia Tech's current general education program, Pathways, was implemented in Fall 2018. Beginning in Fall 2024, Pathways assessment will be conducted on a four-year cycle. In Year 1 (e.g., 2024-2025) and Year 2 (e.g., 2025-2026), assessment data will be collected from a sample of course sections each fall and spring semester. (Sections taught during wintermester and summer sessions will not be sampled.) In Year 3, faculty working groups will discuss the data collected during Year 1 and Year 2 and develop recommendations for improvements to the Pathways program as needed. In Year 4, any recommended improvements will go through the university governance process as needed.

All Pathways instructors are responsible for teaching the Pathways student learning outcomes approved for their Pathways course(s). Instructors of sections sampled for assessment are also responsible for submitting assessment data for each approved student learning outcome. Starting in Fall 2024, Most Pathways assessment data will be submitted through Canvas. For each student learning outcome, instructors will select and assess appropriate student work. Except for extremely rare cases, an instructor will not be asked to submit data more than once during the four-year assessment cycle.

Individual instructors are encouraged to use their own Pathways assessment data to make improvements to their course. Academic leaders can support the Pathways program by emphasizing the importance of sampled instructors submitting required assessment data. Utilizing sampling for Pathways assessment will only work if sampled instructors submit data.

Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT)

SPOT administrators are responsible for serving as the main point of contact for any issues related to the administration of the SPOT survey in their department or college. The main responsibility of department SPOT administrators is ensuring the integrity of their department or college SPOT surveys prior to the evaluation period. These individuals are required to verify that the courses, students, and instructors in Course Evaluations and Surveys (CES) are correct prior to the release of the instrument during each administration period. These users are also responsible for adding any additional program or department items to the main institutional instrument.

Department SPOT administrators are also often asked to run SPOT data reports for university department heads or college deans through either CES or MicroStrategy.

Department SPOT administrators are established at the sole request of deans and/or department heads. Deans or department heads must send an email to IE confirming the addition or removal of a SPOT administrator. It is the responsibility of the department or college to notify IE when SPOT administrator access should be changed.

Department or college SPOT administrators are responsible for reading and agreeing to the SPOT administrator Terms of Compliance annually. By adhering to these guidelines, SPOT administrators help us maintain data integrity and avoid breaches of data confidentiality. More detailed information regarding this process and the roles of the unit is contained in the Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT): Policies and Procedures document, available on the SPOT webpage. If there are issues with the SPOT, tickets should be submitted to 4Help.

Data Guidelines and Policies

Academic Program and Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Assessment (APA)

IE only releases the APA reports in specific instances as needed to document compliance to our regional accrediting agency or to college deans or other senior leadership upon their request. IE will seek the approval of the associated department chair for any other requests pertaining to these documents.

Administrative Unit Assessment (APA)

IE only releases AUA reports in specific instances as needed to document compliance to our regional accrediting agency or upon the request of university senior leadership. For all other requests regarding AUA reports, IE will first seek approval from the unit lead or the division's vice president or vice provost.

Academic Program Review (APR)

IE keeps an archive of each academic unit's APR documents. Information in this archive is shared with the associated college dean as part of the regular APR process. Reports might also be presented to our regional accrediting agency as examples of demonstrating compliance on certain standards. We will not release data and reports kept in the archive to other individuals/units.

Pathways to General Education Assessment (Pathways)

Pathways assessment data will be used to inform and improve the Pathways curriculum and to further enhance student learning at Virginia Tech. This data will be used for program improvement and to fulfill regional, disciplinary, state, and other mandatory compliance requirements. Pathways assessment data will NOT be used for the evaluation of individual instructors or courses.

IE will aggregate all data received at the student learning outcome level, ensuring that data are not identifiable by student, instructor, section, course, or department. Summary data for core and integrative concepts and associated student learning outcomes will be used to determine overall student achievement, the extent to which Virginia Tech is achieving its mission for general education, and whether improvements need to be made to the outcomes, the program, or both.

Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT)

IE follows strict guidelines to ensure that individually identifiable information including students' identities, students' responses, and results associated with instructors, will remain confidential and will not be released to any unauthorized individual. For more information on your responsibilities as a department or college SPOT administrator, please consult the *SPOT Administrator Terms of Compliance*. Failure to comply with the Terms of Compliance can lead to SPOT data privileges being revoked. For further information on the policies governing the SPOT system, please refer to information contained in the *SPOT: Policies and Procedures* document, available on the SPOT webpage.

Survey Research

In general, we attempt to share survey results as broadly as possible. Our findings are never reported in such a way that might compromise student or faculty confidentiality.

- The Virginia Tech Senior Survey collects data related to courses, faculty, advising, and technology. In order to protect student confidentiality, IE will only generate reports for programs with more than 10 respondents. In addition, personally identifiable information will be removed from the qualitative data to protect confidentiality. Raw data will NOT be included in university, college, or department reports or shared with the university community.
- The Virginia Tech Freshmen Survey collects data related to demographics, high school experiences, reasons for attending Virginia Tech, and anticipated university involvement. Raw data will NOT be shared with individuals working outside of the Office of Analytics & Institutional Effectiveness (AIE).
- The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is designed to obtain information from colleges and universities about student participation. The NSSE collects data on a variety of topics, including participation in activities shown to relate to academic and personal development as well as students' perceptions of the college experience. The NSSE is distributed to freshmen and senior students. Raw data will NOT be shared with individuals working outside of AIE. The survey instrument, frequencies and statistical comparison report, and snapshot are available upon request. Department and special reports will be generated upon request.

Data Visualizations

IE transforms raw data in numerical or textual formats collected from the various areas mentioned above into compelling visuals such as graphs, charts, and interactive dashboards. These visuals help stakeholders better comprehend data, identify patterns, trends, and relationships, and derive actionable insights. This process supports data-driven decision-making and promotes continuous improvement efforts.

IE provides both exploratory data visualizations, allowing users to interact with the data, and explanatory visualizations that summarize key findings for decision-makers. The interactive data dashboards are shared with stakeholders at VT. IE has created over 40 interactive visualizations for public consumption or specific units/departments. These are made available through the University DataCommons platform, aiding stakeholders in better understanding data, uncovering patterns, trends, and relationships, leading to actionable insights, which

facilitate data-driven decisions-making and continuous improvement efforts. Additionally, IE develops confidential, specific data visualizations upon request for colleges and departments. These data visualizations are continuously updated based on feedback from administrators and newly collected data in the areas served by IE.

General Contact Information for Institutional Effectiveness

Institutional Effectiveness, Office of Analytics & Institutional Effectiveness (0433)

2020 Kraft Drive, Research Building XVI, Suite 3040

Blacksburg, VA 24061

Phone: 540-231-6994

Contact Information for Specific Institutional Effectiveness Areas

If you have questions about...	Please contact...
General Institutional Effectiveness Areas or Academic Program and Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Assessment	Bethany Bodo
Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) or Survey Research	Nikki Connors
Pathways General Education Assessment or Academic Program Review	Molly Hall
Administrative Unit Assessment	Lauren Bryant
Visualizations	Cesur Dagli
Secondary contact for all the areas listed above	Zach Mellon