

# *Concord University*



## **Plan for Assessing Student Academic Achievement**

**2011-2012**

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*“Failure to plan is a plan to fail.”*

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## **Concord University Plan for Assessing Student Academic Achievement**

Assessment of student learning is a responsibility of the Concord University faculty. Development of goals reflecting the University mission and goals, evaluation of student learning, and implementation of curriculum revision require faculty development and oversight. The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools has charged Concord University to develop and implement institutional assessment as have the oversight commissions of Concord University degree programs which have earned program accreditation. Finally, the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC) requires regular, rigorous program review and reporting.

Concord University's mission and goals reflect the institutional commitment to the improvement of student learning. The educational programs of Concord University are designed to foster skills, knowledge, and attitudes applicable across a wide range of academic fields and professional careers in a culturally diverse, perpetually evolving global community.

- 1) Skills include proficiency in interpreting data, integrating information, formulating ideas, thinking critically, and communicating with others.
- 2) Knowledge refers to familiarity with principles underlying academic discourse in various fields.
- 3) Attitudes are tendencies conducive to self-knowledge, personal growth and development, and responsible citizenship.

Effective assessment is a strategy for understanding, evaluating, and improving student learning within the context of the institution's mission and learning goals.

Therefore, Concord University academic assessment is intended to:

- generate information on student learning outcomes,
- produce evidence of intended student learning,
- guide stakeholders in using information to improve student learning,
- guide broad educational and organizational improvement.

The assessment program reports data on how the University effectively accomplishes its mission and goals through the development of valid, reliable assessment tools. Assessment efforts generate data on student learning through input from all members of the University community. These efforts are designed to result in improvement of student learning by providing feedback to stakeholders concerning curricula, instruction and student support services. Effective assessment demonstrates that Concord's commitment to learning is not simply a matter of compliance.

Concord will continue to participate in the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA). Data from the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and other institutional sources will be included in the College Portrait website maintained by the VSA. The College Portrait will provide stakeholders with quantifiable evidence of the fulfillment of Concord's mission.

### **Goals of the Assessment Process**

The following goals and objectives have been developed by Concord faculty to ensure effectiveness of the assessment program. Each goal and/or objective is a

measurable reflection of the University's mission. These goals are re-evaluated and revised each year as needed.

**Goal 1: Ensure faculty, administration, staff, and student knowledge and involvement in the University's assessment program in an effort to increase commitment to educational improvement based on student learning outcomes.**

- Objective 1a: Establish a system of communicating assessment information to University stakeholders.
- Objective 1b: Provide faculty development opportunities on assessment.
- Objective 1c: Improve student involvement in assessment.
- Objective 1d: Involve faculty and staff from across the University in Assessment Committee meetings.
- Objective 1e: Increase the "usability" of assessment results by clearly indicating areas for improvement.

**Goal 2: Implement a systematic process for the collection, compilation, analysis, and use of documentation of student learning outcomes.**

- Objective 2a: Implement the revised General Studies assessment measures.
- Objective 2b: Implement a timetable for development of departmental assessment plans and reports.
- Objective 2c: Ensure departmental goals are consistent with the University mission and goals.

- Objective 2d: Complete an annual assessment report summarizing institutional assessment results and changes resulting from results.
- Objective 2e: Distribute and discuss results with all stakeholders.
- Objective 2f: Departmental assessment plans will be consistent with University mission and goals.
- Objective 2g: Departmental assessment reports will demonstrate achievement of University goals both within the discipline and in General Studies.

**Goal 3: Concord University students will demonstrate the attainment of knowledge, skills, and attitudes outlined in the mission and goals statements.**

- Objective 3a: Students' mean scores on the CLA will be equal to or greater than the national norm.
- Objective 3b: Comparison of the FAS and GSS surveys will demonstrate attitude change consistent with University goals.
- Objective 3c: Student engagement, as measured by the NSSE will be equal to, or greater than, the national norm.
- Objective 3d: Student responses to the GSS survey will indicate preparedness for education or employment upon graduation.
- Objective 3e: Capstone courses in specific disciplines will indicate preparedness for education or employment upon graduation.

**Assessment Components**

As stated in the Concord University mission, the University's programs are designed to foster skills, knowledge, and attitudes applicable across a wide range of

academic fields and professional careers in a culturally diverse, perpetually evolving global community. The mission statement stresses the value of student learning. Since the University’s assessment efforts flow from the mission, the following four tables illustrate the correspondence between the University’s goals and the institutional-level component measures used to assess these goals.

Each academic department contributes to the overall assessment effort by developing assessment plans and submitting regular assessment reports. These reports document accomplishment of discipline specific goals corresponding to the University mission and goals.

**Skills:** Proficiency in interpreting data, integrating information, formulating ideas, thinking critically, and communicating with others.

Table One: Skill acquisition as assessed by component measures.

<b>SKILLS</b>	<b>CLA</b>	<b>NSSE</b>	<b>GSS</b>	<b>CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE</b>
Effective inter-communication skills and literacies	X		X	X
Proficiency in skills used for problem solving	X		X	X
Ability to conduct, interpret, and apply scholarly research			X	X
Ability to analyze, synthesize, and integrate elements, information and ideas	X		X	X
Ability to critically evaluate information and ideas	X		X	X
Ability to apply learning in different contexts	X	X	X	X
Ability to learn and work independently and collaboratively		X	X	X

**Knowledge:** Familiarity with principles underlying academic discourse in various fields.

Table Two: Knowledge acquisition as assessed by component measures

KNOWLEDGE	GSS	CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE
Understanding of the reciprocal influences of environments, cultural beliefs and attitudes, and societal institutions and practices		Political Science Sociology Geography Social Work
Awareness of the fundamental characteristics and properties of the physical universe.		Chemistry Physical Science Natural Science
An ability to interpret events and trends within historic contexts.		History Political Science Sociology Geography
Proficiency in language acquisition including linguistics mathematics, and computer language systems.		Language Math Computer Science
A recognition of the complex interactions between organisms and their environments.		Biology Zoology Geography
An awareness of the principles, methods, materials, and media employed in the creation and presentation of art and literature.		Fine Arts Language and Literature
Self-knowledge, including awareness of one's competencies, deficiencies and learning-style.	X	Psychology Social Work Education

**Attitudes:** Tendencies conducive to self-knowledge, personal growth and development, and responsible citizenship.

Table Three: Attitude formation as assessed by component measures

ATTITUDE	FAS	NSSE	GSS
Ethical decision-making	X	X	X
Responsible leading and following	X	X	X
Respect for diversity and conflict resolution	X	X	X
Fostering of well-being	X	X	X
Appreciation of art and creativity	X	X	X
Social responsibility	X	X	X
Lifelong learning and intellectual growth	X	X	X



Table Four gives a brief description of the component measures used in assessment. A more complete description of each measure is included in Appendix A.

Table Four: Descriptions of component measures

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Development</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Information Collected</b>	<b>Nationally Normed?</b>
Freshman Attitude Survey (FAS)	All entering freshmen	Local	Collects pre-test information on attitudes and values post-tested in the GSS.	Attitudes and values related to Concord's stated goals.	No
National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (Administered every third year)	Sample of freshmen and seniors	External	Collects student perceptions of undergraduate quality and engagement.	Quality of effort inside and outside the classroom; educational and personal gains; satisfaction.	Yes
College Learning Assessment (CLA)	Sample of freshmen and seniors	External	Direct measure of analytic and written communication skills.	Proficiency in analytic reasoning and written communication skills.	Yes
Capstone Experiences	Seniors	Internal	Direct measure of learning outcomes in major field of study.	Specific outcomes by discipline.	No
Graduating Student Survey (GSS)	Seniors	Local	Collects information on perceived learning outcomes in general education and major field as well as overall satisfaction and changes in attitudes and values.	Reports of knowledge acquisition in general education and major field; satisfaction with educational experiences; attitudes and values related to Concord's mission.	No

## **Program-level Assessment**

Concord's academic programs are charged with developing an effective assessment process at the course and program levels. Annual assessment reports are submitted for review by the Assessment Committee, Vice President and Academic Dean (VPAD), and President. Included in the reports are departmental goals, data, findings, recommendations, and departmental changes resulting from assessment. Academic programs often use nationally-normed measures specific to the subject, and/or develop their own outcome indicators including comprehensive exams, portfolio projects, and capstone projects. The process clearly mandates annual use of assessment results for planning academic improvements. Following review by the Assessment Committee, the annual assessment reports are forwarded to the VPAD and President. An updated assessment schedule, incorporated into the academic calendar, was implemented in the 2009-2010 academic year. The timeline for the assessment cycle follows as an example:

- November 1: Reports from Divisions to Assessment Director for Committee Review.
- December 1: Reports from Assessment Director back to Divisions with comments.
- January 18: Divisions send reports back to Assessment Director with corrections.
- February 19: Final reports and executive summaries to VPAD from Assessment Director.
- March 29: Executive summaries from VPAD to Board of Governors agenda and Academic Affairs BoG Sub-Committee.

- April 12: The VPAD reviews assessment reports and forwards planning recommendations to the President.
- May 10: University President responds to academic improvement efforts proposed and implemented at the departmental level through the VPAD, Director of Assessment, and academic division chairs.

Only 80% of academic programs submitted complete and timely assessment reports in the 2010-2011 academic year. The goal for the 2011-2012 academic year is to increase the rate to 100%.

## **Appendix I.**

### **Description of Assessment Components**

## **Freshman Attitude Survey (FAS)**

Who takes it and when is it administered?

All entering freshmen take the online survey as part of their orientation course early in the fall semester.

How long does administration take?

Approximately 30 minutes

Who originates the survey?

The Director of Assessment

When are results typically available?

Within four months following administration

What type of information is sought?

The FAS asks questions related to attitudes and values reflected in University goals. Used as a pre-test measure of locally developed questions administered as a post-test to seniors in the GSS.

To whom are the results regularly distributed?

President, VPAD, Division Heads, and Assessment Committee

Are the results available by division or discipline?

Yes

Are the results comparable to data of other universities?

No

What is the estimated cost of administration?

No cost

## **National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)**

Who takes it and when is it administered?

A sample of freshmen and seniors take the measure during the spring semester of every third academic year.

How long does administration take?

15 minutes

Who originates the survey?

National Survey of Student Engagement

Center for Postsecondary Research

Indiana University Bloomington

Eigenmann Hall, Suite 419

1900 East Tenth Street

Bloomington, IN 47406-7512

(812) 856-5824

<http://www.indiana.edu/~nsse/>

When are results typically available?

The December following administration of the NSSE

What type of information is sought?

The NSSE measures student perceptions of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interactions, enriching educational experiences, and supportiveness of the campus environment.

To whom are the results regularly distributed?

President, VPAD, Division Heads, and Assessment Committee

Are the results available by division or discipline?

No

Are the results comparable to data of other universities?

Yes

What is the estimated cost of administration?

There is a \$275 participation fee plus a per-student sampling fee based on undergraduate enrollment. The total cost varies from approximately \$2,500 to \$5,000.

## **College Learning Assessment (CLA)**

Who takes it and when is it administered?

A sample of freshmen and seniors take the test. Fifty percent are administered the Applied Writing tasks and fifty-percent take the Performance tasks test.

How long does administration take?

1 ½ hours

Who originates the survey?

CLA at CAE

212.217.0700

cla@cae.org.

When are results typically available?

The following academic year

What type of information is sought?

Applied Writing tasks measure a student's ability to articulate complex ideas, examine claims and evidence, support ideas with relevant reasons and examples, sustain a coherent discussion, and use standard written English. Performance tasks require students to use an integrated combination of critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication skills to answer several open-ended questions about a hypothetical but realistic situation.

To whom are the results regularly distributed?

President, VPAD, Division Heads, and Assessment Committee

Are the results available by division or discipline?

No

Are the results comparable to data of other universities?

Yes

What is the estimated cost of administration?

The cost is covered by the WV HEPC.

## **Graduating Student Survey (GSS)**

Who takes it and when is it administered?

All graduating seniors take the online survey as part of their graduation packet shortly prior to commencement.

How long does administration take?

Approximately 30 minutes

Who originates the survey?

The Director of Assessment

When are results typically available?

Within four months following commencement

What type of information is sought?

The GSS asks questions related to student satisfaction, attitude formations, and perceived skill and knowledge acquisition reflecting University goals. The GSS is also used as a post-measure of locally developed questions administered to freshmen in the FAS.

To whom are the results regularly distributed?

President, VPAD, Division Heads, and Assessment Committee

Are the results available by division or discipline?

Yes

Are the results comparable to data of other universities?

No

What is the estimated cost of administration?

No cost

## **Capstone courses**



Who takes it and when is it administered?

The majority of seniors take a capstone course and/or engage in a capstone experience in their major field of study.

How long does administration take?

One semester

Who originates the survey?

The program faculty

When are results typically available?

The fall following the year in which the course/experience occurs

What type of information is sought?

Each discipline establishes specific outcomes

To whom are the results regularly distributed?

President, VPAD, Division Heads, and Assessment Committee

Are the results available by division or discipline?

Yes—by discipline only.

Are the results comparable to data of other universities?

No

What is the estimated cost of administration?

No cost

**Appendix II.**  
**Freshman Attitude Survey**

**FRESHMAN ATTITUDE SURVEY**

Dear Student:

You recently became a Concord University student. You will contribute much to Concord in your time here, and hopefully Concord will contribute to your personal and intellectual growth. Your answers to this questionnaire will help Concord improve academic programs and services. All responses will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you for your assistance and best wishes for success.

**1. What is the highest academic degree you plan to earn?**

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Professional degree (e.g. M.D., D.O., J.D.)
- Doctorate

**2. What is your primary future plan?**

- Graduate or professional school
- Working in a new job
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**3. What were your two most important reasons for attending Concord?**

**Primary reason:**

- Cost
- Size
- Social atmosphere
- Ratio of teachers to students
- Location
- Quality of academic programs
- Academic reputation
- Availability of scholarship
- Availability of financial aid
- Family influence
- To be with friends
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Secondary reason:**

- Cost
- Size
- Social atmosphere
- Ratio of teachers to students
- Location
- Quality of academic programs
- Academic reputation
- Availability of scholarship
- Availability of financial aid
- Family influence
- To be with friends
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Please indicate your intended major(s): \_\_\_\_\_**

**5. Please indicate your intended minor(s): \_\_\_\_\_**

**6. During the past year, approximately how many hours per week did you spend outside of class on course-related work (e.g. homework, papers, projects, rehearsals, studio work, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_ hours**

**7. Upon entering Concord, approximately how many hours per week will you spend working on-campus? \_\_\_\_\_ hours**

**8. Upon entering Concord, approximately how many hours per week will you spend working off-campus? \_\_\_\_\_ hours**

**9. During the course of the past school year, how often were you involved in the following activities?**

	NEVER			OFTEN	
Interacting with people from other cultures	1	2	3	4	5
Discussing topics with others whose opinions or personal values differ from your own	1	2	3	4	5
Using the library to gather research materials and information	1	2	3	4	5
Communicating with a faculty member outside of class	1	2	3	4	5
Attending a cultural event	1	2	3	4	5
Writing papers and/or projects	1	2	3	4	5
Applying the knowledge and skills gained in one discipline to learning in other disciplines	1	2	3	4	5
Discussing issues of social, cultural, or academic significance with others	1	2	3	4	5
Completing reading assignments for class preparation	1	2	3	4	5
Using a computer lab for completion of assignments	1	2	3	4	5

**10. Rate yourself on the following traits and abilities:**

	LOW			HIGH	
Leadership ability	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to work cooperatively with a group	1	2	3	4	5
Ethical decision making	1	2	3	4	5
Respect for diversity	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to think independently	1	2	3	4	5
Love of learning	1	2	3	4	5
Critical thinking ability	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to write clearly	1	2	3	4	5
Reading comprehension	1	2	3	4	5
Conflict resolution	1	2	3	4	5
Social responsibility	1	2	3	4	5

**11. Please indicate your intended year of college graduation** \_\_\_\_\_

**12. Please indicate your sex**                      male                      female

**13. Please indicate your age** \_\_\_\_\_

**14. Please indicate your marital status**

Married  
Divorced  
Single  
Widowed

**15. Will you be a resident or commuter?**

Resident  
Commuter

**16. Permanent residence**

West Virginia  
Other state  
Other country

**17. How would you describe your race/ethnicity?**

Black, non Hispanic  
American Indian  
White, non Hispanic  
Asian  
Hispanic  
Multi-racial  
Other

**Appendix III.**  
**Graduating Student Survey**

**GRADUATING STUDENT SURVEY**

Dear Graduating Student:

Soon you will be a Concord University graduate. You have contributed much to Concord in your time here, and hopefully Concord has contributed to your personal and intellectual growth. Your answers to this questionnaire will help Concord improve academic programs and services. All responses will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you for your assistance and best wishes for continued success.

**1. What is the highest academic degree you plan to earn?**

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Professional degree (e.g. M.D., D.O., J.D.)
- Doctorate

**2. What is MOST LIKELY to be your PRINCIPAL activity upon graduation?**

- Employment, full-time paid
- Employment, part-time paid
- Graduate or professional school, full-time
- Graduate or professional school, part-time
- Additional undergraduate coursework
- Military service
- Volunteer activity (e.g. Peace Corps)
- Starting or raising a family
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**3. What were your two most important reasons for attending Concord?**

**Primary reason:**

- Cost
- Size
- Social atmosphere
- Ratio of teachers to students
- Location
- Quality of academic programs
- Academic reputation
- Availability of scholarship
- Availability of financial aid
- Family influence
- To be with friends
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Secondary reason:**

- Cost
- Size
- Social atmosphere
- Ratio of teachers to students
- Location
- Quality of academic programs
- Academic reputation
- Availability of scholarship
- Availability of financial aid
- Family influence
- To be with friends
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Please indicate your major(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Please indicate your minor(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

6. Approximately how many hours per week do you spend outside of class on course-related work (e.g. homework, papers, projects, rehearsals, studio work, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_ hours
7. Approximately how many hours per week do you spend working on-campus? \_\_\_\_\_ hours
8. Approximately how many hours per week do you spend working off-campus? \_\_\_\_\_ hours
9. During the course of the past school year, how often were you involved in the following activities?

	NEVER			OFTEN	
Interacting with people from other cultures	1	2	3	4	5
Discussing topics with others whose opinions or personal values differ from your own	1	2	3	4	5
Using the library to gather research materials and information	1	2	3	4	5
Communicating with a faculty member outside of class	1	2	3	4	5
Attending a cultural event	1	2	3	4	5
Writing papers and/or projects	1	2	3	4	5
Applying the knowledge and skills gained in one discipline to learning in other disciplines	1	2	3	4	5
Discussing issues of social, cultural, or academic significance with others	1	2	3	4	5
Completing reading assignments for class preparation	1	2	3	4	5
Using a computer lab for completion of assignments	1	2	3	4	5

**10. Rate yourself on the following traits and abilities:**

	LOW			HIGH	
Leadership ability	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to work cooperatively with a group	1	2	3	4	5
Ethical decision making	1	2	3	4	5
Respect for diversity	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to think independently	1	2	3	4	5
Love of learning	1	2	3	4	5
Critical thinking ability	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to write clearly	1	2	3	4	5
Reading comprehension	1	2	3	4	5
Conflict resolution	1	2	3	4	5
Social responsibility	1	2	3	4	5



**11. How effective has your Concord University education been in helping you to:**

	Very Ineffective				Very Effective
Analyze written arguments	1	2	3	4	5
Appreciate other cultures	1	2	3	4	5
Appreciate fine arts	1	2	3	4	5
Broaden your intellectual interests	1	2	3	4	5
Develop leadership skills	1	2	3	4	5
Improve decision-making abilities	1	2	3	4	5
Reason mathematically	1	2	3	4	5
Respect different points of view	1	2	3	4	5
Speak to groups	1	2	3	4	5
Think critically	1	2	3	4	5
Think independently	1	2	3	4	5
Use information technology	1	2	3	4	5
Write clearly	1	2	3	4	5
Develop math skills	1	2	3	4	5
Interpret events within historical contexts	1	2	3	4	5
Understand the relationship between individuals and their environment	1	2	3	4	5
Understand the physical universe	1	2	3	4	5
Solve problems	1	2	3	4	5
Work independently	1	2	3	4	5
Work in groups	1	2	3	4	5
Apply learning in different contexts	1	2	3	4	5
Conduct research	1	2	3	4	5
Interpret and apply research	1	2	3	4	5
Analyze information and ideas	1	2	3	4	5
Synthesize information and ideas	1	2	3	4	5
Master the subject matter of your major	1	2	3	4	5
Apply knowledge in problem solving	1	2	3	4	5
Find and apply information	1	2	3	4	5
Understand multiple perspectives	1	2	3	4	5
Develop a love of learning	1	2	3	4	5
Understand your own competencies	1	2	3	4	5
Understand your own deficiencies	1	2	3	4	5
Realize your learning style	1	2	3	4	5

**12. How satisfied were you with the experiences, services, and facilities at Concord as listed below?**

	Very Dissatisfied			Very Satisfied	Not Applicable	
Student Life	1	2	3	4	5	0
Faculty interaction	1	2	3	4	5	0
Feedback from faculty	1	2	3	4	5	0
Teaching in General Education	1	2	3	4	5	0
Teaching in major field	1	2	3	4	5	0
Campus intellectual climate	1	2	3	4	5	0
Faculty enthusiasm	1	2	3	4	5	0
Availability of major field courses	1	2	3	4	5	0
Availability of general education courses	1	2	3	4	5	0
Quality of courses in major field	1	2	3	4	5	0
Quality of general education courses	1	2	3	4	5	0
Accessibility of faculty	1	2	3	4	5	0
Academic advising by faculty	1	2	3	4	5	0



## **Appendix IV.**

### **Assessment Check sheet for Academic Departments**

## ASSESSMENT REPORT CHECKSHEET

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

	Components	Comments
	<b>OVERALL</b> (Refer to Assessment Handbook)	
	Uses appropriate assessment report framework.	
	Uses appropriate assessment plan matrix.	
	Contains no major clerical errors.	
	<b>DESCRIPTIVE STATUS OF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES</b>	
	Includes a complete description of program goals and objectives linked to university mission and goals.	
	Describes goals and objectives including learning in general education and the major field.	
	Describes how learning goals are identified and addressed through assessment.	
	Uses multiple direct and indirect assessment measures.	
	Describes indicators of student outcomes currently being used or developed.	
	Describes how indicators are being used linking them to program goals.	
	Describes capstone experiences.	
	Describes data collected.	
	Provides an interpretation of data collected.	
	Describes whether program goals and objectives are being met.	
	Shows evidence of faculty involvement in assessing academic achievement.	
	Incorporates an appropriate time line and provisions for administration.	
	Describes how assessment information will be used.	
	Demonstrates likelihood that assessment activities will lead to programmatic improvement.	

	<b>EVALUATION OF ASSESSMENT STATUS</b>	
	Describes usefulness of indicators being used in assessing student achievement of goals.	
	Describes faculty evaluation of indicators being used.	
	<b>PROBLEM AREAS/ GAPS IN ASSESSMENT</b>	
	Identifies problems encountered using the existing indicators.	
	Identifies gaps in indicators of goal achievement.	
	Describes recommendations for changes in the assessment plan.	
	Describes indicators currently being developed.	
	Describes indicators needed but not currently being developed.	
	<b>USE OF ASSESSMENT DATA FOR PROGRAMMATIC CHANGE</b>	
	Identifies needed programmatic changes identified through assessment activities.	
	Describes plan for programmatic improvement including examples.	

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

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