



# HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

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March 6, 2020

President Thomas Quinn  
Kirtland Community College  
4800 W. 4 Mile Road  
Grayling, MI 49738

Dear President Quinn:

The interim report you submitted to our office has now been reviewed. The staff analysis of the report is attached.

On behalf of the Higher Learning Commission staff received the report on assessment and program learning outcomes. No further reports are required.

The Standard Pathway Year Four Comprehensive Evaluation is scheduled for 2021-2022. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2027– 2028.

Please note: Revisions to HLC's Criteria for Accreditation will go into effect on September 1, 2020. Institutions will be evaluated against the revised Criteria for all reviews conducted after that date, including reviews related to previously assigned monitoring. Institutional reports submitted after September 1, 2020, that reference the Criteria should be written to the revised version. More information about the revised Criteria, including a crosswalk between the current and revised versions, is available on HLC's website at <https://www.hlcommission.org/criteria>.

For more information on the interim report process contact Lil Nakutis, Accreditation Processes Manager, at [lnakutis@hlcommission.org](mailto:lnakutis@hlcommission.org). Your HLC staff liaison is Linnea Stenson ([lstenon@hlcommission.org](mailto:lstenon@hlcommission.org)); (800) 621-7440 x 107.

Thank you.

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION



## STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT

DATE: March 6, 2020  
STAFF LIAISON: Linnea Stenson  
REVIEWED BY: Steven Kapelke

**INSTITUTION:** Kirtland Community College, Grayling, MI

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER:** Dr. Thomas Quinn, President

**PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION AND SOURCES:** An interim report is required by 12/31/2019 on:

- (1) the results of assessment efforts on general education competencies, including faculty analysis of the data (including data on the competency related to diversity) and the planned actions to improve future results; and
- (2) progress on developing and implementing an approach to assessing student mastery of program learning outcomes, including the development of program student learning outcomes for all programs, with an articulation of the difference in learning outcomes between certificates and degrees.

This interim report derives from the Team Report of the institution's 2017 Comprehensive Evaluation.

**REPORT PRESENTATION AND QUALITY:** The Kirkland Community College interim report is presented in a clearly written, well organized narrative supported with a range of supplementary materials contained in the appendices (Appendices A through O). These documents include, but are not limited to "Assessment Team Reports," "Sample Programmatic Assessment Reports," "End of Semester Course Evaluations," and the *Assessment Handbook*. Indications are that the report is thorough and candid.

**REPORT SUMMARY:** Following several brief introductory items that provide context for the body of the report, the document's primary content is presented in two sections, the first describing the institution's efforts pertaining to Core Component 3.A--the second offering an overview of the College's work in learning outcomes assessment (CC 4.B).

With regard to Core Component 3.A, the report states in its "Response" that the institution's faculty undertook review and revision of all program outcomes, with a course created in Canvas—the College's LMS—used to enable the faculty to communicate in between face to face meetings. The review process began in January 2018 with a session on the development of program outcomes. The institution's Assessment Team "*contributed to the educational process and supported the efforts of*

*faculty to complete this task,*” dividing its membership by department to facilitate the mentoring process.

According to the report, the general education faculty, after due consideration, decided that the Associate of Science and Arts (ASA) degree would provide *“the focus of the overall general education program,”* the core competencies for which are included in the appendices. The faculty also developed specific departmental outcomes in Mathematics, Communications, Humanities & Social Science, and Science.

Faculty in the occupational program areas also reviewed and revised program-level outcomes, which are influenced considerably by requirements of disciplinary accrediting agencies. Here the report indicates that, in programs offering both degrees and certificates, these have been crafted in such a way *“to delineate the difference between those levels.”* The College “will” assess all program outcomes and core competencies annually, with changes made to programs based on the results of these assessments.

In response to concerns expressed by the HLC visiting team with regard to assessment of student learning (CC 4.B), the College reorganized the Assessment Team in 2017, with Team members representing all disciplines and departments across the institution. Here the report notes the Assessment Team’s efforts in helping the faculty in its assessment efforts, *“using a systematic approach that reviews what students are learning and how they are assessed.”* The College has also held professional development meetings that center on specific assessment features.

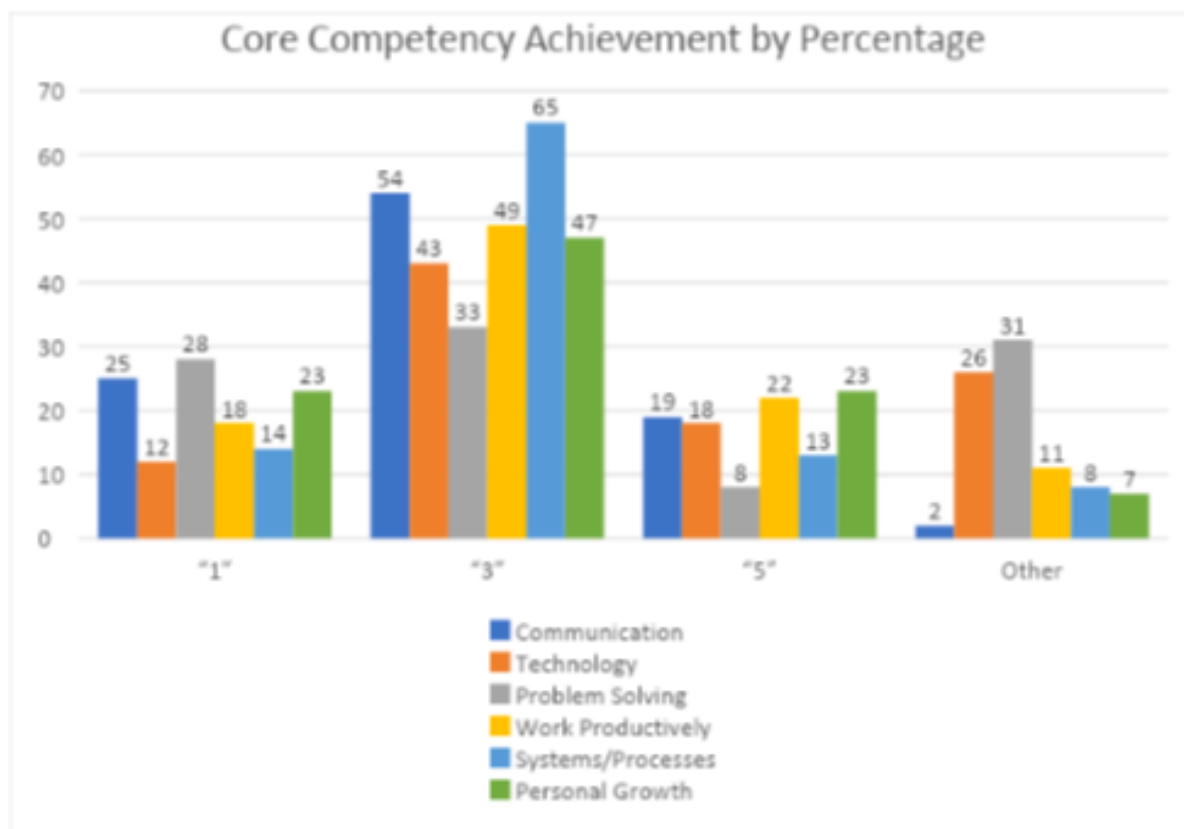
The interim report cites several actions taken by the faculty and the Assessment Team to improve its assessment procedures, including the *“tagging”* of specific assignments to be assessed *“using a rubric value to measure mastery for each student.”* The College also introduced a program assessment template in Summer 2019, and required that each program have a completed draft program assessment report completed by September 2019.

During this period the Assessment Team developed the *Assessment Handbook*, which is included in the appendices, and established the four-step assessment cycle, which is shown below.

- *Phase 1: Kirtland’s Assessment Team facilitates the planning part of the assessment cycle (ad infinitum). Considerations in this phase include: defining assessment milestones, creating and distributing assessment materials, examining perspectives, insights, and concerns from stakeholders, setting and monitoring goals for academic assessment, preparing the assessment tool in Canvas, and assisting faculty in the implementation of assessment.*
- *Phase 2: Faculty (full-time and part-time) creates and assigns summative assessments in their courses then mark the student assignments in Canvas with ratings that represent each student's level of achievement for relevant core competencies and/or program outcomes.*

- *Phase 3: The Assessment Team, with input from faculty, gathers and analyzes data to determine where improvement is needed at the institutional level for core competencies or at the programmatic level for program outcomes. Some areas of improvement may include: overall assessment process, the scoring system, curriculum changes, assessment documents, and data benchmarks and goals.*
- *Phase 4: The Assessment Team, with faculty, uses the results from Phase 3 to develop and execute improvements, thus restarting the cycle.*

At this point the report becomes specific with respect to the results of the core competency assessments of AY2018-2019 graduates; these data are “*derived from a Canvas report on all core competency assessments in all courses.*” These results are represented in the graphic below.



“1” = below mastery; “3” = at mastery; “5” = above mastery; Other = Not evaluated

The report indicates that, generally, the faculty have been pleased with the assessment results, while, at the same time, acknowledging the importance of continued improvement. To that end, the Assessment Team has worked with the faculty to develop means by which to “*further refine core competencies.*” The report provides a list of “Quality Improvement Efforts,” which include, but are not limited to, the following, as articulated in the report:

### *Quality Improvement Efforts*

- *The core competency for Personal Growth and Responsible Citizenship was revised to include diversity. The competency now reads “Personal Growth and Responsible Citizenship - Develop contextual understanding of diversity by respecting differences in culture, perspective, and background as a citizen in local and global communities.”*
- *Program outcomes were added to Canvas as a pilot starting in the Winter 2019 to assess them in a systematic process that mirrors the assessment of core competencies. This process is used by all faculty as of Fall 2019.*

In its concluding section, the report recapitulates key points in the narrative, noting, for example, the work of the Assessment Team in its efforts to improve assessment procedures—and the fact that the faculty submitted an assessment report for each of their respective programs. Here the report notes other changes made by the College pertaining to learning outcomes and assessment, citing, for example, the implementation of a new syllabus template and the recent inclusion of “*diversity*” into the Personal Growth and Responsible Citizenship core competency. In addition, the document makes reference to the changes in learning outcomes in terms of the distinctions between certificate and degree programs.

**REPORT ANALYSIS:** Materials presented in the Kirkland Community College interim report provide evidence that the institution has taken a series of positive steps to address HLC concerns pertaining to learning outcomes and assessment.

Based on the evidence contained in the report, it can be inferred that the institution’s review of its program learning outcomes was thorough and well considered. The College’s faculty reviewed and revised all program outcomes and was apparently able to maintain an ongoing discourse about the project through a course created in the institution’s learning management system. At this point in the report, the document also notes the efforts of the Assessment Team, which, based on the evidence, seems to provide a strong “managerial” feature to the College’s assessment efforts.

The report also describes in adequate detail the work of the general education faculty in making determinations about the core competencies in general education and developing outcomes in the respective general education (Arts and Sciences) departments, such as Mathematics and Communication. Similarly, review of the supporting materials provided in the report’s appendices confirm the assertion made in the narrative that the occupational areas also completed review and modification of program-level outcomes—and have made distinctions in these outcomes between those designated for certificate programs and for degree programs. Shown below, as an example, is an excerpted list of outcomes from the AAS degree program in Foundations in Art

## Foundations in Art and Design, AAS

At the end of the program, students will be able to:

- solve communication problems and carry projects from creation through to the final production process.
- describe and respond to the audiences and contexts, which communication solutions must address, including recognition of the physical, cognitive, cultural, and social human factors that shape artistic decisions.
- create and develop visual concepts in response to communication problems, including an understanding of the principles of visual organization, information hierarchy, symbolic representation, aesthetics, and the construction of original meaningful forms.
- understand tools and technology, including their roles in the creation, reproduction, and distribution of visual messages. Relevant tools and technologies include drawing, painting, photography, and illustrative and digital media.

Review of the evidence described in the narrative and verified in the materials contained in the appendices, shows that the institution has also made improvements in its procedures for assessing student learning. As described, the College's efforts in this area have been comprehensive in nature, with leadership provided in part by the Assessment Team, which was reconstituted in 2017 to ensure representation from all academic areas. Among other actions attributed to the Assessment Team, two stand out:

First, the Team devised a four-step assessment cycle (shown in the Report Summary section above), which provides a logical series of assessment activities to be followed, culminating in the use of assessment data to make improvements

Second, the Assessment Team developed the *Assessment Handbook*, a comprehensive document that offers a reliable, accessible source of information to the faculty. The scope of the Handbook is impressive, containing both practical approaches to assessment as well as language describing the importance of assessment in meeting educational goals.

**Analysis Concluding Statement:** Kirkland Community College has complied in all respects with the interim report requirements set forth in the Team Report of the College's 2017 Comprehensive Evaluation and confirmed in subsequent HLC Actions.

As noted above, the institution has made concerted efforts to ensure that all programs have clearly stated learning outcomes and outcomes for the degree and certificate programs are well differentiated. In similar fashion, the College undertook review and revision of its assessment procedures under the oversight of the Assessment Team, resulting in a precisely articulated assessment cycle, the development of a qualitative *Assessment Handbook*, and completion of the first round of assessment reports in 2019. The Higher Learning Commission acknowledges the institution's progress to date and will not require additional reporting on these topics. (Please see the Staff Action section below.) The College is to be commended on the quality of its report.

However, given the newness of many of these activities, the institution will need to give continued attention to the assessment of student learning to assure continued engagement in this important enterprise. (Please see the Staff Finding section below.)

The College should assume that the HLC Peer Review Team conducting the institution's AY2021-2022 Comprehensive Evaluation will examine closely its continued progress in assessment—and the use of data derived from assessment activities in the furtherance of student learning.

**STAFF FINDING:**

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s): Core Component 3.A

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.

Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.

Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.

Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s): Core Component 4.B

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.

Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.

Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.

Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

**STAFF ACTION:** Receive the report on assessment and program learning outcomes. No further reports are required.

The Standard Pathway Year Four Comprehensive Evaluation is scheduled for 2021-2022. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2027– 2028.