

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.

*Signature of Institution’s President or Chancellor Date*

*Dr. Kayse Shrum, President Printed/Typed Name and Title* Oklahoma State University *Name of Institution*

Stillwater, Oklahoma

*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](http://www.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 of the Quality Initiative:** Cultivating an Effective Culture of Outcomes Assessment for Continuous Improvement to Support Student Success

## Brief Description of the Quality Initiative:

The Oklahoma State University (OSU) Quality Initiative (QI) is focused on revitalizing ongoing institutional student learning assessment. The initiative embraces new technology and provides evidence based on program outcomes assessment use of findings to inform decision-making. A multi- year process is underway to continuously improve student learning through a campus-wide, systematic, and comprehensive assessment operation focused on knowledge and skills. A Quality Initiative Committee, formed from University Assessment and Testing (UAT) personnel and representatives from assessment committees and coordinators, will develop a procedure to support a culture of quality assessment by demonstrating continued progress since 2018. This project uses a new tool, Nuventive Improvement Platform (NIP), to assist in making the assessment process more efficient, meaningful, and analytically powerful.

Implementation of this new tool shifts the emphasis within each academic program from data collection and planning to action plans and program improvement. This change is accomplished by first establishing solid assessment plans for each program. A practical, effective assessment plan consists of three to five student learning outcomes (SLOs) that align with the program’s learning objectives. These SLOs are measured using direct method(s) and supplemented with indirect methods to collect meaningful data for evaluation that will inform the decision-making process related to the learning objective and overall program. In a collaborative process, UAT personnel and college assessment committee associate deans or representatives will work with program coordinators to develop concrete assessment plans, including the SLOs and methods, for their unique programs. Once these plans have been established in Nuventive, the focus will shift from building programs’ foundations for assessment to guiding improvements based on annual findings.

NIP is a planning and outcomes assessment system that aids in organizing, aligning, documenting, and reporting assessment materials. Obtaining and fully implementing NIP as the mechanism will achieve the essential goals of this project and continue to create a supportive culture of assessment by engaging academic departments and programs, administrators, faculty, and staff in active collaboration. This assessment tool will support strategies and methods to improve student success; faculty buy-in; and an interconnected network among faculty, program coordinators, administrators, and other assessment professionals.

An effective assessment culture can be achieved by modifying and developing new and more robust procedures for streamlining the data collection and data management processes for institutional and program assessment; providing relevant resources for program assessment coordinators, faculty, and administrators; and tracking meaningful program and institutional assessment history in a central location. NIP can aid in accomplishing these steps to build a culture of assessment. With Nuventive, UAT staff and program assessment personnel will be able to identify discrepancies between the perception of what is done versus the reality of what is occurring. Identifying gaps in student learning through assessment will allow programs to close those gaps and align practice with theory. Similarly, UAT will be able to react, inform, and create a plan of action to promptly support continuous program improvement.

In past years program assessment at OSU consisted of exchanging paper-based annual assessment reports via email or file sharing services. This method was problematic as it did not support proper documentation, easy delivery of feedback, or prompt interpretation of results at the college or institutional level. In addition, the disparate report formats and locations prevented UAT personnel and

coordinators from drawing meaningful conclusions about data trends across years or programs. NIP can generate custom visualizations of data between years and programs, allowing users to observe data within the full historical context at the program, department, and college level and reveal long-term trends. By using an assessment management system such as Nuventive to collect and store data, efficiency and transparency will become an inherent part of the process and, as a result, will promote accountability in the decision-making process.

The structure and key elements of the project will be established while maintaining the primary objective, fostering a culture of assessment by addressing areas needing improvement, and providing technical support for assessment personnel. Throughout the QI, gaps will be identified to connect relevant factors and illustrate a broad picture of the overall initiative. Through this QI, more detailed data and information can be aligned from all units across the OSU community, including Student Affairs and individual faculty who teach or support general education efforts. The QI will evaluate and demonstrate how OSU provides the opportunities and environment that encourage students to become the best versions of themselves inside and outside the classroom. With each student’s specific nature and program’s unique learning outcomes, faculty are well equipped to know their students’ potential, which qualities best define the ideal graduate, and what employers are searching for in a candidate.

UAT will provide better tools to academic programs to support their students by providing technical, practical, and financial support; delivering useful and relevant resources; and launching a streamlined process for programs outcomes assessment. All students will have the opportunity to be equipped with the knowledge and skills that will lead to success in their chosen fields. This objective can be achieved by identifying these components among their student learning outcomes and aligning them with the overall department and college missions and institutional strategy. The recently established OSU administration is working to introduce a new strategy that was approved by the OSU/A&M Board in fall 2022. With this approval, the QI will be modified accordingly to align with the new goals. Due to the two-year longitudinal nature of this initiative’s planning, the QI is based on the previous mission and strategic plan from the prior OSU administration; therefore, information below stems from OSU’s prior mission, core values, and strategic plan.

Through the QI, programs, departments, and divisions within Academic Affairs will learn to recognize essential tenets of an effective assessment culture where it is understood that assessment of student learning is essential to higher education; improvement is the primary purpose of assessment; learning does not occur simply because content has been taught; student learning assessment is reflected in the application of knowledge as well as the development of cognitive skills, dispositions, and workplace readiness; and interrelationships among course, academic program, and institutional learning assessments inform decision-making to enhance student success.

An effective assessment culture will represent and promote OSU’s core values throughout each program, department, and division. Implementing the proposal and expanding assessment technologies will enhance communication and collaboration and bring a sense of community to a diverse group of assessment personnel throughout the institution. The QI will equip assessment faculty and staff to demonstrate efficient and effective use of assessment resources, such as assessment committees, software, and college and program assessment funds. Finally, the QI will serve as a tool in the university’s commitment to integrity, continued improvement, and the search for excellence.

# Sufficiency of the Initiative’s Scope and Significance

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

The proposed initiative is relevant to OSU because its objective is to align the student learning outcomes assessment process to the administration’s mission and core values. Upon receiving the updated institutional mission, the QI will be adjusted to properly align with the new strategy and mission set forth by the new administration. The currently proposed initiative is significant in that it aims to more firmly connect assessment outcomes to actual and quantifiable student success metrics.

Further, UAT has aligned its mission and efforts with the OSU mission while following guidelines established by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). As a unit under the Division of Academic Affairs, it is important for UAT to aid in cultivating an institutional environment that promotes student success and identifies areas for program improvement.

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

The goal of the QI is to impact academic quality by directly connecting the outcomes assessment process to each level of OSU’s prior strategy which emphasized academic excellence, student success, and community engagement. Upon the introduction of the new strategy, this proposed initiative will be reviewed to address any new institutional interests.

Effective institutional assessment processes and procedures are essential to academic excellence. The purpose of the QI is to build upon OSU’s existing assessment structure by closing the loop between assessment outcomes and student learning. The QI will provide resources to programs to promote student success by utilizing learning outcomes that align with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of the ideal graduate. Employing an assessment management system such as Nuventive will centralize information and streamline the process of collating data from all academic areas. When all student learning assessment is organized under one umbrella, stakeholders can observe trends across time as well as programs, departments, and colleges. Using Nuventive as a historical archive will aid in addressing previous obstacles to efficient assessment, like losing access to programs’ assessment data and information due to personnel changes. Transparency and accountability will continue for each program across years and, as a result, quality assessment data will be produced and maintained for stakeholders as justification for evidence-based decisions going forward.

# Clarity of the Initiative’s Purpose

4. Describe the purposes and goals for the initiative.

## Goal 1:

Establish robust institutional assessment processes and procedures

The purpose of this QI goal is to demonstrate the usefulness of NIP to guide continuous program improvement for academic programs and student affairs through assessment planning, reporting, methods, findings, and use of findings.

The QI objectives related to this goal include:

* Establish a collaborative community among assessment personnel committed to reinforcing robust assessment policies and procedures
* Build a community where open dialogue and opportunities are encouraged among programs, with UAT offering support
* Provide resources that previously did not exist, such as training workshops, tutorial videos, learner/user manuals, and checklists

## Goal 2:

Measure the use of technologies and trainings that better serve academic programs in assessment activities

The purpose of this QI goal is to establish and cultivate an active, productive, meaningful, and collaborative assessment environment across the university.

The QI objectives related to this goal include:

* Use technologies such as Nuventive Improvement Platform, Qualtrics, Canvas, and the UAT website
* Use direct measures such as how the assessment report information is collected using the new assessment management tool, NIP
* Use indirect measures such as administration of the Assessment Feedback Survey (AFS) which measures attitudes toward the utilities of technologies, trainings, and the existing assessment process

## Goal 3:

Create data transparency and accountability using Power BI in Nuventive Platform Analytics

The purpose of this QI goal is to establish a robust assessment process and support for programs and campus units.

The QI objectives related to this goal include:

* Provide coordinators edit access within Nuventive to programs they oversee and read-only access to department heads and associate deans
* Once the full picture of student learning assessment is known, identify gaps so that support can be provided and solutions discussed

## Goal 4:

Use evidence-based information when making decisions in support of student success

The purpose of this QI goal is to identify evidence gaps in the assessment process in both academic affairs and student affairs in their efforts to promote student success, while simultaneously supporting OSU’s mission.

The QI objectives related to this goal include:

* Make decisions based on documents and reports such as the annual Program Outcome Assessment reports, each program’s unique action plans, and Annual Executive Summaries uploaded within NIP
* Provide direct feedback to program coordinators from UAT assessment staff during the Program Outcome Assessment review process

## Goal 5:

Establish and document collaboration among academic affairs units and align key objectives in achieving connection with OSU’s mission, goals, and strategies

The purpose of this QI goal is to align academic program assessment with departments, colleges, and the institution to highlight the significance of assessment at the program level and how it is connected to a broader institutional purpose.

The QI objectives related to this goal include:

* Use Power BI data visualization software through Nuventive Platform Analytics to expand communication and collaboration
* Close the assessment loop and identify gaps in student learning to support the Academic Excellence component of the OSU mission and lead to informed decision making to support student success

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

Advising

 Assessment

Civic Engagement Curriculum Diversity Engagement

Faculty Development First-Year Programs General Education

Leadership

Learning Environment Online Learning

Persistence and Completion

Professional Development

Program Development Program Evaluation Quality Improvement

Retention Strategic Planning

 Student Learning Student Success Teaching/Pedagogy Underserved Populations Workforce

 Other: Technology Implementation

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

To evaluate progress, adjust, and determine what has been accomplished by the QI, consistent review procedure will be put in place to appraise activities. To start, a Quality Initiative Facilitator, the Director of UAT, will work with UAT personnel to organize a Quality Initiative Committee from existing assessment committees and coordinators. Existing committees include the Assessment and Academic Improvement Council (AAIC) and the Committee for the Assessment of General Education (CAGE). The QI team will establish a review process using assessment tools such as an evaluation checklist, rubrics, follow-up surveys, and interviews to gather evidence for each objective. The committee will meet regularly to evaluate how each expected key objective is progressing and what adjustments might need to occur. A biannual status report will then be provided to the provost and the OSU HLC liaison.

# Evidence of Commitment to and Capacity for Accomplishing the Initiative

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

Assessment efforts made by UAT in recent years to improve the quality of assessment, whether reinforcing assessment staff with qualified personnel, redefining guidelines, or advancing technologies, have received substantial support from Academic Affairs, which includes the Office of the Provost and the OSU HLC liaison. Aside from receiving backing from its home division, UAT has also received guidance and support from two essential assessment committees: the Assessment and Academic Improvement Council (AAIC) and the Committee for the Assessment of General Education (CAGE).

The mission of AAIC is to improve student academic achievement through providing leadership for assessment by developing and encouraging the adoption of policy changes and other improvements as indicated by assessment data. Their vision is to improve student learning and development through a nationally recognized and fully integrated assessment and improvement process. The AAIC is comprised of representatives from each of OSU’s six colleges, Division of Academic Affairs, Division of Student Affairs, Faculty Council, OSU Library, and CAGE, as well as ex officio representatives from Institutional Research and Analytics (IRA), Graduate and Professional Student Government Association (GPSGA), Student Government Association (SGA), and others who may serve an important assessment role for the institution.

Over two decades ago, AAIC appointed a sub-committee to focus on general education assessment, the Committee for the Assessment of General Education (CAGE). CAGE consists of five faculty members from a variety of disciplines and academic colleges. CAGE has been collecting and assessing portfolios of student artifacts on a four-year rotating cycle that is also developed by the committee, covering areas such as critical thinking, written communication, diversity, information literacy, professionalism, and ethics. Within the last two years, UAT and CAGE have begun implementing general education units in NIP where longitudinal data can be reported and stored. In the future, UAT and CAGE plan to connect Canvas to NIP to streamline the general education assessment process.

Further, the UAT assessment staff has dedicated time and concerted efforts reaching out to the more than 200 program assessment coordinators across campus by offering information, guidance, funding, and support towards assessment activities. With endorsement from AAIC, UAT assessment staff has worked to promote assessment as an integral part of institutional culture. The strategies and initiatives executed to promote this culture include the following actions:

* Inform faculty members, administrators, and other stakeholders about the assessment process and promote the use of assessment results in decision-making processes
* Promote the availability of resources to enhance assessment practices and improve the use of assessment results
* Inform students about the assessment process and how it is used to improve their learning and development
* Integrate assessment with academic program review and other university processes
* Support the development of assessment expertise in future faculty members and current graduate students
* Develop stable relationships with faculty and staff who are most closely engaged with the outcomes assessment process. Such support includes UAT’s five-year program outcomes assessment reviews, results from the Assessment Feedback Survey, and additional documents to aid programs with their assessment-related questions during their Academic Program Review (APR).

The QI proposal was discussed and officially endorsed by the Academic Assessment Improvement Council (AAIC) and Instruction Council (IC) during the 2021-2022 academic year. Additionally, the proposal has been circulated within the Office of the Provost and with the OSU HLC liaison for endorsement and support over 2021 and 2022. With this level of support, UAT, through the

Quality Initiative and beyond, will continue to demonstrate the necessity of a progressive outcomes assessment process, while building on these relationships and establishing new ones.

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

University Assessment and Testing (UAT) is the group that will lead and be directly involved in implementing the initiative. This well-respected unit promotes student learning and success by acquiring and providing OSU institutional assessment councils and committees with the highest level of assessment-related tools, technology, and best practices; supports academic programs throughout their annual program outcomes assessment reports and five-year plans; encourages cooperation and engagement with faculty through development and support; and develops and implements necessary and effective strategies for survey creation, data collection, data analysis, and reporting for General Education Assessment and other critical evaluations.

The Quality Initiative Facilitator will be the individual that will lead and be directly involved in implementing the initiative. This individual will meet with offices or committees (listed in 9 below) to establish goals and objectives. Biannually, with input from the relevant committees and individuals, the QI Facilitator will create a progress report to be discussed and finalized with the QI committee. Finally, the progress reports and updates will be provided to the provost and the OSU HLC liaison.

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

*Personnel/Committee Support*

* The University Assessment unit will consist of:
  + Director, Associate Director of Assessment and Analysis, two Assessment Specialists, and a Graduate Research Associate
* The QI committee will consist of representatives from:
  + Academic Affairs Units (AA) – These units include the Office of the Provost as well as University Assessment and Testing (UAT). Both will contribute expertise in assessment and other assessment-related policies when consulting with the QI committee.
  + Academic Assessment Improvement Council (AAIC) – AAIC is composed of representatives from all seven OSU academic colleges as well as representatives from the OSU Library, IRA, Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, CAGE, and student representatives. Their focus will be to guide assessment and improvement processes throughout the Quality Initiative process.
  + Committee for the Assessment of General Education (CAGE) – CAGE, a subcommittee of AAIC, is composed of five faculty members across academic colleges and is tasked with undertaking general education assessment on an institutional level.
  + Instruction Council (IC) – The associate deans for instruction and academic affairs from each academic college and the Graduate College serve on this council, which is chaired by the vice provost for undergraduate education. This group meets monthly during the academic year (more often if needed) to discuss all aspects of instructional programs, including curriculum, course delivery, and faculty instruction.
  + Institutional Research and Analytics (IRA) – Through a close partnership with UAT, IRA has created interactive dashboards and other institutional analytic solutions to aid in assessment efforts.

*Financial Support*

It is the responsibility of AAIC and UAT to provide stewardship of students’ assessment fees. This will be accomplished by:

* Ensuring that student assessment fees are used in accordance with guidelines set by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) and OSU, and
* Considering careful and responsible allocation of funds to achieve the largest impact for the benefit of student learning and development.

*Technological Support*

* Nuventive Improvement Platform – This assessment management system provides a flexible framework to help the academic community organize, document, report, and plan effective actions for program improvement. In 2018, Nuventive was first implemented at OSU accompanied by UAT-led training sessions for all program coordinators and the first active annual report submission from programs. Three years later, in 2021, the full suite of Nuventive functions was implemented, including the addition of units for General Education and Student Affairs assessment management.
  + Nuventive Improve Analytics – Nuventive Improve Analytics is a data visualization feature within Nuventive that employs Microsoft Power BI. Through these automatic, interactive dashboards, users can track data and leverage information related to improvement initiatives and decision-making across program, department, college, and institutional levels.
* Qualtrics Online Survey Platform – Qualtrics is an online survey platform that enables users to distribute surveys, collect and analyze data, and produce reports of survey responses. Institutional surveys, like OSU’s Student Satisfaction Survey and Student Engagement Survey, have provided meaningful indirect data to support OSU’s strategies, while fulfilling requirements of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. UAT also utilizes Qualtrics to help facilitate surveys for other OSU units as part of the collaborative mission and in support of OSU’s land grant mission.
* Qualtrics QClassroom – OSU acquired QClassroom to administer the Student Survey of Instruction (SSI) each semester. The SSI provides an opportunity for students to regularly give feedback to instructors regarding their experience in OSU courses.
* Canvas – Canvas is a web-based learning management system that facilitates online instruction and communication between faculty and students. UAT uses Canvas to collect student artifacts for General Education analysis, as well as to share resources with assessment personnel across campus. Canvas Connect, a feature that will connect Canvas with the Nuventive system, will be implemented to further simplify artifact collection for both General Education and student learning assessment.

# 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.

*Completed/Current Activities*

Phase 1 | 2018-2019 – 2019-2020

In support of Goals 1 and 2, UAT has completed the following activities:

* Transitioned from paper submission to online submission through Nuventive,
* Implemented the POA report fields in Nuventive,
* Created a POA review rubric to standardize the criteria for student learning assessment and improve the clarity and objectivity of UAT’s feedback to programs,
* Delivered several training workshops for college representatives, program coordinators, and other assessment personnel to support users through the transition to online submission, and
* Introduced the Annual Executive Summary to the report template as an opportunity for coordinators to summarize programs’ assessment findings and planned improvements. This abridged form can be shared with department heads, associate deans, or other interested parties who require a brief snapshot of assessment progress.

Phase 2 | 2020-2021 – 2021-2022

In support of Goals 1, 2, and 3, UAT has completed the following activities:

* Entered programs’ 2016-2017 POA reports and review scores into Nuventive to fill in the picture of student learning assessment progress at OSU,
* Completed a pilot three-year review of POA data using the review rubric,
* Consulted with Nuventive support staff to create customized Power BI dashboards to improve data visualizations of POA data across years,
* Introduced the homepage checklist to program units within Nuventive to provide a status update of the programs’ assessment plans and reports at a glance,
* Initiated discussions and provided solutions regarding the obstacle of missing reports due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on regular academic functions, and
* Performed a pilot five-year review of POA data in Nuventive using a pioneering five-year review rubric endorsed by AAIC.

*Upcoming Activities*

Phase 3 | 2022-2023 – 2024-2025

In support of Goals 1, 2, and 3, UAT aspires to complete the following activities:

* Update the POA forms within Nuventive Improvement Platform to emphasize the program’s Use of Findings and Action Plan,
* Further align the institution’s assessment policies/procedures with Aims 1, 2, 3, while bringing Goals 4 and 5 into primary focus,
* Use the results of the five-year review to guide conversations with institutional stakeholders concerning effective assessment practices, programs’ POA report completion, and procedures and policies to address missing or incomplete POA reports,
* Work closely with college representatives and program coordinators to apply the results of the five-year review to their units’ assessment practices and address assessment needs,
* Develop additional, pertinent resources and training opportunities for program coordinators and other assessment-related personnel,
* Create a roadmap of continuous improvement and best practice strategies to guide for programs, departments, colleges, and the institution to guide student learning assessment going forward,
* Engage with the OSU community from top to bottom to improve the culture of assessment and build an environment of support by inviting feedback from administrators, faculty, and assessment-engaged staff, and
* In 2024-2025, begin reflecting on the progress and alignment of the institution’s efforts with the aims of this Quality Initiative proposal in preparation for closing the cycle prior to the reaccreditation visit during the academic year 2025-2026.

# Institutional Contact for Quality Initiative Proposal

Include the name(s) of the primary contact(s) for the Quality Initiative. Name and Title: Brenda Masters, Director, University Reaccreditation Phone: 405-744-4522 Email: [brenda.masters@okstate.edu](mailto:brenda.masters@okstate.edu)