FAQs about Formative Assessments for Academic Programs

- **Who do I contact for additional information?**
  - Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) staff. Phone: 270-809-3341. Email: msu.assessment@murraystate.edu.

- **When do we have to start formative assessment?**
  - Formative assessments began in the 2013-14 assessment cycle. All plans going forward should include both formative and summative assessment measures.

- **What are formative assessments? What are summative assessments?**
  - Formative assessments measure how well students are developing skills and knowledge described in learning outcomes.
  - Summative assessments, on the other hand, measure whether students have mastered, at the level expected for the program, the skills and knowledge described in the learning outcomes.

- **In which courses (at what points in the curriculum) should we conduct formative assessments?**
  - Formative assessments for each learning outcome should be conducted when students are developing the knowledge and skills described in the outcome.
  - An assignment or test in a course identified as developing (D) on the course alignment matrix is an example of a direct, formative assessment. A survey that asks faculty to rate students’ progress as a group is an example of an indirect, formative assessment.

- **Do we have to conduct formative assessments for graduate programs, certificate programs, and endorsement programs?**
  - Yes. All programs that confer a degree, certificate, or endorsement—including undergraduate and graduate programs—must conduct both formative and summative assessments.

- **Do we have to conduct assessments in every course that’s identified as a “D” (formative) or an “M” (summative)?**
  - No, you are not required to conduct assessments in every course identified as developing (D) or mastery (M). You are welcome to select which courses, assignments, or educational experiences will provide you with the best information about your SLO. Your completed CAM will provide you with information about where you could conduct formative or summative assessment.

- **How do we conduct formative assessment if there’s not a course appropriate for formative assessment that all students are required to take?**
  - Conduct formative assessments in multiple courses identified as developing knowledge and skills related to the learning outcome. For example, if students must choose one of three courses, you may want to conduct a formative assessment in each of the three courses.
  - If your course alignment matrix revealed that students may progress through the curriculum without taking courses identified as developing the learning outcomes, you may need to revise your curriculum.

- **What do we do if the SLO is developed and mastered in the same course? In only one course?**
  - You may be able to use an early assignment in the course as a formative assessment and a later assignment as a summative assessment, if the later assignment is more difficult or if the students are expected to perform at a higher level on the later assignment.

- **How do we conduct formative and summative assessment in a certificate/endorsement program with a small number of credit hours (i.e., 9 hours)?**
  - Please contact the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to discuss your program. We will assist you with developing an assessment strategy that fits your program and fulfills our institutional accreditation standards.

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