The ultimate purpose of assessment is continuous improvement of the student learning experience. "Continuous improvement" is a reflective and intentional process that uses assessment results to enhance programs, services, and operations across the institution. Continuous improvement planning should be informed by analysis of the data and align specifically with the outcome and assessment results.

"Closing the loop" refers to revisiting prior assessment cycles to evaluate the impact of improvements and determine next steps. This ongoing cycle of inquiry and action helps faculty and staff build on existing strengths, respond to evolving needs, and ensure that programs contribute meaningfully to student success.

All continuous improvement plans and closing the loop statements are documented in Watermark Planning and Self-Study.

Administrative and Academic Support Units

Program staff are responsible for developing continuous improvement plans. Consider the following when reviewing results for planning:

- Review performance levels and criteria: was the bar set too high or too low?
- Location: was feedback from one location or modality better than another?
- What services were rated higher and lower? Was the assessment instrument granular enough to identify strengths and weaknesses?
- For student outcomes, how did students perform or what were student perceptions of services/programs?
- Evaluate the accuracy of the assessment methods and instruments: did the assessment method measure what it was intended to measure?
- Involve other program and unit stakeholders in planning: insights are often the product of collaboration.

Academic Programs

Program faculty are responsible for developing continuous improvement plans. Faculty should consider the following to aid in drafting continuous improvement plans:

- Location and modality: did students perform better in one modality versus another, or better at one location than another?
- If a rubric was used, were there differences in performance across dimensions?
- In what areas did students perform better? What were the weakest areas?
- Review performance levels and criteria: was the bar set too high or too low?
- Evaluate the accuracy of the assessment methods and instruments: did the assessment method measure what it was intended to measure?

Closing the Loop

The final step is to close the loop, which involves looking back at previous planning and evaluation cycles to document the changes and their impact. Some planning activities may take more time to put into practice than one cycle, and this can also be recorded in the closing the loop statements.