

# Student Guide to Assessment

## What is Student Learning Assessment?

Assessment can be defined as the process of determining the quality and quantity of student learning in order to make improvements. It is critical that Mesalands Community College faculty and staff meaningfully capture and document what they are teaching, what students are actually learning and how this information is used to improve the teaching-learning relationship.

## Why do we do it?

Mesalands Community College clearly states in its Mission statement that it values student learning:

*Mesalands Community College is an institution of higher education that **promotes student learning** through quality education and services while fostering personal growth, leadership, and opportunity to a culturally diverse community.*

The first Goal of the College is to provide:

- *An environment where learning is appreciated, encouraged, and **assessed**.*

The College is not only committed to encouraging student learning, but also to finding out if it occurs. Learning is about more than grades. Assessment is our method of finding out how and how much students learn in order to enhance the learning environment at the College.

## Types of Assessment

During your studies here at the College, you will be assessed using a number of different tools including:

### Placement Testing

ACCUPLACER is a series of computerized assessments that Mesalands Community College uses to place students into an appropriate math, English, reading and/or computer course. Based on their placement scores, students could be required to take up to four additional math courses, two English courses, two reading courses, and one computer course before they can even begin their regular College courses. Each one of these additional courses a student places into will cost extra time and tuition money to complete and also uses up financial aid eligibility; therefore, students are strongly encouraged to do their very best on these placement exams. Retaking the exam to further improve your results will cost an additional \$25 above the initial fee.

Preparing yourself for the ACCUPLACER by reviewing and taking practice exams can save you significant time and money. Ask an Educational Services Center staff member for an ACCUPLACER Sample Test. You can also go to <http://accuplacerpractice.collegeboard.org> for either the Sample Test or a Learn as You Go app which explains the correct answers. These study apps are free of charge but you must register with ACCUPLACER.

In short, it would be in your best interest to give your very best effort when taking these exams. Take your time and plan on a minimum of two (2) hours to complete the exams.

### **General Education Competencies**

The College has identified six General Education Competencies that all Mesalands Community College graduates will demonstrate upon completion of a degree. These competencies (Writing, Oral Communication, Information Technology, Critical Thinking, Scientific Reasoning, Mathematical Reasoning) represent the most deeply held values of the College.

General Education Competencies are assessed wherever or however learning occurs, utilizing rubrics. Simply put, a rubric is a scoring tool that identifies specific expectations for a task or assignment. Rubrics divide the task into its component parts and provide a detailed description of what constitutes an acceptable or unacceptable level of performance for each of those parts (Stevens and Levi, 2005).

### **ENG 299 Capstone Portfolio Course**

Students in their last semester prior to graduation with a degree are required to successfully complete the ENG 299: Capstone Portfolio Course. This course assists students in documenting general education competency achievement in communication (writing, oral communication, and informational technology), critical thinking, scientific and mathematical reasoning during their program of study. Program specific competency attainment is assessed using rubrics. These General Education Competency Rubrics can be found at <https://www.mesalands.edu/academic-programs/assessment/>. This course is a culmination of the general education course work you completed towards your AA or AAS degree.

### **Program Objectives**

The purpose of program level assessment is to document how well students are accomplishing specific program objectives. The program objectives reflect those knowledge, skills and professional dispositions valued by workplace employers and other interested parties. Program objective assessment is carried out within each degree and certificate program on a daily basis in the classroom.

### **Institutional Assessment Surveys**

The College uses a number of different surveys to collect information regarding your experiences here at Mesalands Community College. Information gathered from these surveys, e.g., Student Success Survey, Graduate Survey, Student Affairs Survey, etc., help the College better identify ways to improve student success. When asked to do so, please fill out these surveys completely and accurately so that the College can improve its learning environment.

### **ACT National Career Readiness Certificate**

All students enrolled in ENG 299 are required to take the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) assessment. Completion of the NCRC comprises a portion of the ENG 299 final grade. The NCRC uses the WorkKeys exam to measure workplace skills critical to job success. The NCRC is an industry recognized, portable, evidence-based credential that documents essential skills needed for workplace success by assessing applied math, workplace documents, and graphic literacy skills. These skills are required for 77% of the 20,999 job profiles in the ACT JobPro Database.

### **Where can I find more information about student learning assessment?**

You can learn more about student learning assessment at Mesalands Community College via the following ways:

- <https://www.mesalands.edu/academic-programs/assessment/>
- in the College Catalog
- in the Student Handbook
- as part of the curriculum during the ACS 100: Student College Success course
- by contacting the Chair of the Student Learning Assessment Committee