UC MERCED

POLICY FOR ANNUAL ASSESSMENT AND PERIODIC REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

Overview

To promote continuous, evidence-based improvement in support of the University's mission of teaching, research and service, the UC Merced Administrative Unit Assessment Policy (AUAP) outlines the minimum requirements for a coupled Annual Assessment and Periodic Review process. As an umbrella policy, the AUAP recognizes differences in the professional cultures of administrative units across the campus.

Introduction & Purpose

Every administrative unit uniquely contributes to the realization of UC Merced's mission[1], with the quality of this work influencing the degree to which UC Merced achieves excellence. For the purposes of this policy a "unit" is a functional group tasked with specific responsibilities that is located within a School or administrative entity (ex. a Division) led by a Dean, Vice Chancellor or equivalent. The term Division refers to a non-academic, administrative domain composed of one or more units reporting to a Vice Chancellor.

To maintain focus on contribution, quality, and improvement, and in support of transparency and accountability, the Administrative Unit Assessment Policy (AUAP) outlines the minimum requirements of a coupled Annual Assessment and Periodic Review process that is grounded in the mission, goals and outcomes of an administrative unit.

As described by this policy, Annual Assessment[2] involves an evidence-based appraisal of the extent to which a unit is meeting its desired outcomes for the purpose of taking action to improve effectiveness. Also with the goal of improvement, Periodic Review builds on Annual Assessment asking a unit to comprehensively examine the efficacy of its Annual Assessment activities for improving the quality of its services, and to review its goals and outcomes in light of the collective results of Annual Assessment and the evolving institutional and unit context.

Both Annual Assessment and Periodic Review are intended to support meaningful and effective assessment processes for the purpose of appraising the quality of a unit's work relative to an intended level of performance that is determined by the unit.

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[1] "The University of California, Merced's mission is embodied in its proud claim of being the first American research university of the twenty-first century. As the tenth campus of the University of California, UC Merced will achieve excellence in carrying out the University's mission of teaching, research and service, benefiting society through discovering and transmitting new knowledge and functioning as an active repository of organized knowledge. As a key tenet in carrying out this mission, UC Merced promotes and celebrates the diversity of all members of its community."

[2] Assessment is a process by which information is obtained relative to a desired outcome or goal. Assessment refers to the collection of data to describe or better understand an issue in order to improve unit effectiveness or student learning. Evaluation, in contrast, is the process of drawing a conclusion about worth or quality relative to a standard.

This policy also expects that the results of Annual Assessment and Periodic Review will inform the planning, decision-making, and budgeting processes of the unit and/or division in a manner that reinforces evidence-based improvement by supporting, as feasible, actions to implement improvements in function and service.

As outlined by this policy, Figures 1 and 2 represent the relationship between unit planning and assessment processes for a generic unit and the Division of Administration respectively. The latter illustrates how the policy can be implemented within the context of unit-specific planning and assessment infrastructure.

Scope and Oversight

The AUAP is an umbrella policy that outlines the minimum requirements for Annual Assessment and Periodic Review, recognizing that specific planning and assessment strategies and infrastructure may differ among the professional cultures of administrative Divisions, Schools or their equivalent. As such, these entities may develop their own policies and procedures, providing they meet the expectations outlined by this policy.

The AUAP applies to all administrative units reporting to the Chancellor, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, and Vice Chancellors for Administration and University Relations. The leadership of a Division, School or equivalent administrative entity determines the granularity at which the policy is implemented, being sure to address distinct and essential functional units.

The Chancellor or designate oversees the AUAP, including Periodic Review. The Senate-Administrative Council on Assessment (SACA) evaluates implementation of the AUAP with respect to how well assessment is conducted, including the completeness of the assessment process.

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT

Purpose & Process

In support of evidence-based improvement, Annual Assessment involves

(1) Developing an assessment plan anchored in the unit's mission and supporting goals, and outcomes.[3]
(2) Implementing the plan to collect data/evidence[4].
(3) Analyzing and interpreting data/evidence relative to desired levels of performance.
(4) Using these results to identify and implement actions to improve the degree to which the unit is meeting its outcomes. Actions should address both the unit's service activities and its assessment practices, the latter affecting a unit's ability to meaningfully appraise its efficacy.
(5) Reporting assessment methods, results and actions to be taken, at the unit and Division/School levels.
(6) Considering assessment conclusions in formulating the unit's budget.

[3] See Section A of Appendix A for definitions of these terms.
[4] In its broadest sense, evidence includes everything that is used to determine the truth of an assertion, including assertions in the form of outcome statements, and can be quantitative (data) or qualitative in nature.

Annual Assessment Plan:

An example template for developing an Annual Assessment plan is provided in Appendix A.

Schools, Divisions, or equivalent administrative entities may develop their own Annual Assessment planning infrastructure provided it meets the six expectations outlined above, including evidence-based mechanisms for assessing the degree to which the unit meets its outcomes, goals, and ultimately mission. To support excellence in teaching, research, and service, the unit's mission, goals and outcomes must be aligned, in hierarchical fashion, with the relevant overarching missions, including ultimately UC Merced's mission[1]. As appropriate, unit missions, goals, and outcomes should also be informed by expectations established by relevant professional societies and organizations. Section A of Appendix A provides guidance for developing mission, goals and outcomes.

All assessment plans should also attend to good assessment practices, including the generation of reliable and valid results that are appraised in relation to a desired level of performance (i.e. a standard). Appendix B explains these terms. For many administrative units, a customer satisfaction survey may be one of several useful lines of evidence for assessing achievement of unit goals.

Units also may elect to elaborate a multi-year assessment plan, developing an integrated set of annual plans based on a comprehensive set of outcomes for the unit. In this way, units can plan for assessments that may require multiple years of data or maximize the information gained from assessment tools like surveys. A multi-year assessment plan is a useful product of Periodic Review.

Unit Annual Assessment Report

An example template for an Annual Assessment Report for individual units is provided as part of Appendix A.

Schools, Divisions, or equivalent administrative entities may develop their own Annual Assessment reporting structure, provided it addresses (1) the unit's progress in meeting its outcomes, (2) associated actions for improvement addressing unit services and/or programs and, as necessary, the assessment process, (3) progress on WASC-related action items[5] and (4) contributions to Institutional Assessment Initiatives. Items 3 and 4 need only be addressed as relevant.

Annual Assessment Report for Divisions, Schools, or Equivalent Entities

On behalf of the Division, School or equivalent entity, the Vice Chancellor, Dean or equivalent shares with the Chancellor or designate and SACA an Annual Assessment Report that includes (1) a brief summary and evaluation of each unit's progress as provided in the unit's Annual Assessment Report, (2) a summary of resource needs identified through the assessment process, including an explanation of

[5] These include action items from the most recent UC Merced Self-Study, WASC Visiting Team Report and WASC Commission Action Letter. These reports are available at accreditation.ucmerced.edu.

their priority in the budgeting process, (3) as relevant, responses to Institutional Assessment Initiatives, and (4) each unit's Annual Assessment Report.

Budgeting

As appropriate, each unit's Annual Assessment Report will inform each its budget request.

Timeline

The timeline for submitting annual reports is to be determined by the Vice Chancellor or Dean or equivalent in accordance with the unit's annual budgeting and timeline process.

PERIODIC REVIEW

Purpose

Building upon Annual Assessment, Periodic Review involves a comprehensive and retrospective review of assessment results and practices to inform unit planning. Specifically, units will

(1) Compile and review Annual Assessment results, comprehensively considering what has been learned about the unit's performance relative to its responsibilities and intended performance;
(2) Evaluate the efficacy of Annual Assessment activities for improving the quality of a unit's services; and
(3) In light of the bullets 1 and 2, as well as evolving unit and institutional context and priorities, review the unit's goals and outcomes, identifying plans for improving performance, including the quality of assessment as a means of evidence-based improvement.

Schedule

Periodic Reviews of all administrative units normally must be conducted at least once every seven years. The exact time interval should be responsive to the unit's development or management needs balanced with the practical need to manage the number of reviews conducted annually.

In order to optimize the effective use of resources required for these Periodic Reviews, senior administrators may request a waiver of the scheduled formal review of a unit. The reason for the waiver should be based on a review of the unit's annual reports and the supporting evidence of consistent, strong, and effective performance. It may also be requested because of recent changes in the management of a unit that may suggest the need for additional time to implement and/or assess the unit's function. The Chancellor or designate approves requests to postpone a review.

Process

The Periodic Review process involves the following components.

(1) A self-study that includes sections addressing the three purposes of Periodic Review outlined above (see *Purposes*) and results in a report that is submitted to the appropriate Vice Chancellor or Dean. An example template is provided in Appendix C.
(2) A review phase in which a review team examines the unit's self-study documents and submits a written assessment and recommendations to the unit and Vice Chancellor or Dean. The review team should be external to the unit and include at least one member external to the campus. See Appendix D for details.
(3) A planning phase in which the unit develops an implementation plan for addressing recommendations raised in the self-study and the review team assessment. Plans should be submitted to the appropriate Vice Chancellor or Dean and be explicit, realistic, and include a timeline for implementation.
(4) A dissemination phase in which the Chancellor or designate distributes a summary of the unit's review, including recommendations and action items, to the unit head and SACA. This summary will also be available online at as evidence of the institution's commitment to institution-wide assessment.

A School, Division or equivalent entity may develop its own Periodic Review process and template provided it meets the three purposes outlined in the *Purposes* section above and includes steps equivalent to the four components outcomes in this section.

Budgeting

The results of Periodic Review should be considered in formulating the unit's budget.

Timeline for Conducting Periodic Review

By June 1 each year, after consultation with SACA, Vice Chancellors and Deans, the Chancellor or designate will notify the Vice Chancellors and/or Deans as to which administrative units have been scheduled for the formal Periodic Review. Vice Chancellors or Deans may determine the timeline for completing Periodic Review in keeping with their unit's periodic review policy, internal timelines, planning processes. An example timeline is provided in Appendix E.

Appendix A: Example Template for an Annual Assessment Plan & Report

The following template is a modification of that developed by UC Merced's Division of Student Affairs to guide annual assessment planning within the Division. It is provided as an example and, therefore, may not precisely match the assessment planning needs of all administrative units. Divisions or Schools may adapt it as necessary to meet the needs of their units in relation to this policy.

University of California-Merced
Annual Assessment Plan Template

A) Elements of an Assessment Plan:

Mission Statement

Departmental/unit missions should be directly aligned with those of the University and School/Division. A mission statement should include approximately 3-5 sentences that identify the **name** of the department, its **primary functions**, **modes of delivery** and **target audience**. Mission statement should be approximately 100 words or less.

Goals

Goals are broad statements that describe priorities and intentions of an administrative unit; what the unit intends to do. Goals are used primarily for planning, and if available linked to the School/Division/unit strategic plan. Goals may be identified on an annual basis or for a larger time interval.

Outcomes[6]

An outcome is a precise statement that describes the desired accomplishment of an administrative unit with respect to a key service, function, or program. An outcome statement should be derived from a goal and, thus, describe how a unit is fulfilling a purpose outlined by that goal in a *measurable* way. Put another way, outcome statements animate goals, specifying the manner in which the goal is to be met and measured.

Clear and precise outcomes statements define specific performance expectations for a unit. In doing so, they indicate the kind of data or evidence the unit will collect to ascertain the degree to which the desired outcome has been met. Outcomes should focus on the unit's critical processes and functions and should be written with the unit's "customers" in mind.

Two different types of outcomes can be recognized. A process-related outcome describes a desired quality like timeliness, accuracy, responsiveness, etc. in relation to key functions and services. These types of outcomes support improvement around issues related to efficiency and customer satisfaction.[7]

A learning outcome describes how a customer (or student) will demonstrate what they know or are able to do, or how they have changed, as a result of the unit's program or service. Learning outcomes often begin

[6] Some of the text below was adapted from Nichols, James O. 2008. *Measuring Student Support Services and Administrative Outcomes* from the UCF Administrative Assessment Handbook. University of Central Florida.
[7] The Division of Student Affairs refers to these types of outcomes as Program Objectives.

with the phrase "Participants will be able to…" Units that provide professional development or required training for faculty or staff will likely develop learning outcomes to assess the efficacy of their programming in meeting unit goals. Similarly, units or departments that work directly with students, like those in Student Affairs, will have student learning outcomes.

Assessing more than one outcome per goal can provide insights for improving performance that cannot be generated from consideration of a single outcome alone. For example, a unit may pair an outcome related to customer satisfaction with one considering key service-related performance metrics to generate insight into the quality of service from both customer and provider perspectives. A process-related outcome and learning outcome can be paired to similar effect. When completing an assessment plan, briefly explain why each outcome is important to measure.

Measures

Measures describe the methodology and timeframe for data collection and, as possible, the criteria/standard for evaluating sufficiency or success (ex. X% of respondents will rate X service as satisfactory or better). Measures also should identify the population from which data are collected.

B) Elements to be addressed in Annual Assessment Report:

Results

Provided for each outcome, results include a brief narrative of findings, and/or essential tables or graphs that summarize and communicate the results. The results should indicate the extent to which the outcome was met relative to the criteria or standard outlined in the measures section of the Assessment Plan.

Conclusions

Provided for each outcome, the conclusion should summarize briefly the collection and analyses of data and the meaningfulness of the results, including any lessons learned for improving the assessment process. ***Critically, the conclusion also must "close the loop" by identifying what decisions and/or program modifications, including to the assessment process, were made on the basis of these analyses.*** When drawing conclusions, please be sure to integrate results from complementary outcomes, as relevant.

C) Developing the Annual Assessment Plan:

Based on the elements described in part A of this Appendix, the Annual Assessment Plan should describe:

(1) The unit's mission;
(2) The goals to be addressed in a given year, including the rationale for each goal;
(3) For each goal, the supporting outcome(s) and rationales for each outcome; and
(4) For each outcome, the measure.

Results and conclusions will be addressed in the Annual Assessment Report, which describes the results of the work planned here.

D) Developing the Annual Assessment Report

To complete the Annual Assessment Report, add to the unit's Assessment Plan (part C of this Appendix) the results and conclusions sections described in part B of this Appendix. In other words, add the following

(5) For each outcome, describe the results.
(6) For each outcome, describe the conclusions.

Appending the final steps of the assessment process to the planning description provides the unit with a complete record of the assessment activities undertaken that year. These records will help to simplify preparation for Periodic Review. WASC will also expect this material to be available in future accreditation reviews.

Finally, as relevant, please be sure to summarize:

(7) Progress on WASC–Related Action Items. Describe, with supporting evidence, the unit's progress in addressing relevant action items that were identified in the most recent WASC report(s).[8] Append the supporting evidence to the Annual Assessment Report.
(8) Contributions to Institutional Assessment Initiatives. Provide requested materials or analyses related to Institutional Assessment Initiatives.

[8] These include action items from the most recent UC Merced Self-Study, WASC Visiting Team Report and WASC Commission Action Letter. These reports are available at accreditation.ucmerced.edu.

Appendix B: Explanation of Additional Assessment Terms.

Reliability: Reliability addresses the degree to which a procedure is expected to generate the same observation repeatedly under the same conditions. It is the consistency of the measurement or result.

Validity: Validity describes the degree to which an assessment procedure generates useful information (evidence or data) that bears directly on the expectation(s) described by the text of the unit's outcome. For learning outcomes, valid evidence must also be aligned with the criteria[9] used to evaluate learning.

Validity also depends upon sample size[10] or sampling approach, with the goal of generating data that characterize the norm for, or are representative of, the population being studied. That is, the sampling approach should produce information that is not biased. Validity is questioned, for example, when the sample size is small relative to the total size of the population of interest or if the demographics of the sample differ from those of the population from which the sample was drawn.

Together valid and reliable assessment practices are the foundation for confidence in conclusions about the degree to which the unit's outcome was met. Confidence in assessment results, and actions taken on their behalf, can also be enhanced by employing multiple and complementary lines of evidence. For example, assessment of a service-related outcome might benefit from surveying aspects of user satisfaction while also gathering information on how users actually engage with the service.

Standard: The expectation or point of comparison for determining the degree to which a unit's outcome was met (ex. X% of respondents will rate X service as satisfactory or better). The terms standard, benchmark and criterion are often used interchangeably. Standards or benchmarks may be locally determined, externally determined against peers or professional standards, or referenced against previous measurements to gauge improvement. When identifying a standard consider the purpose(s) for engaging in assessment; what is the rationale for identifying this level of performance as a goal? If locally set, be realistic but also unafraid to stretch the unit to improve. To take maximum advantage of the information collected through assessment, consider the distribution of observations (ex. the percentages of respondents reporting different degrees of satisfaction), not just a single metric like a mean or median, when assessing a unit's performance relative to a standard.

[9] Criteria are the specific skills or abilities to be measured.

[10] As an example, the number of survey respondents relative to the total number of individuals to which the survey was sent.

Appendix C: Example Periodic Review Self-Study Template

A. Introduction, Mission, Goals, Outcomes[11] and the Unit's Role within the University.

Drawing on the unit's Annual Assessment Reports,

1) Define the unit's mission; what services are provided and to whom? How does the mission support the campus' mission?

2) List the unit's goals and outcomes with reference to the unit's "customers". The outcomes should describe the essential functions of the unit in a measurable way. Do they reflect the standards of a professional association?

3) Where are the mission and outcomes publicly available? Are they well aligned with the unit's mission?

4) Describe how the unit is organized and resourced. Is the unit organized and resourced to foster its outcomes?

5) Beyond the unit's mission and outcomes, in what ways does the unit contribute to the success of the campus and other units?

B. The Planning Processes of the Unit

How does the unit use the campus' mission or campus-wide strategic planning documents to make decisions, set priorities, plan strategically, and assess its functions and services?

C. Assessment Plan and Measurement of Outcomes.

Drawing on the unit's Annual Assessment Reports,

Describe how the unit assesses its performance in order to identify strengths and weaknesses and to improve performance. For each outcome identified in Section A above describe a) the measures/data that are used to determine how well the unit meets the outcome and, thereby, serves the needs of the customers; b) the intended level of performance with respect to these measures/data; c) how frequently data are gathered; and d) how frequently results are analyzed, conclusions drawn, and, as needed, improvements identified and enacted.

D. Progress on WASC–Related Action Items

Summarize the unit's contributions to addressing WASC-related action items identified in the most recent UC Merced Self-Study, WASC Visiting Team Report and WASC Commission Action Letter. For these materials, see accreditation.ucmerced.edu.

E. Special Issues to be Addressed

1) Has the unit been reviewed by a professional organization for accreditation, credentialing or similar purposes? If so, describe the outcomes and major conclusions of this review. 2) Address any additional assessment questions or steps specific to this unit and/or this periodic review, including those related to Institutional Assessment Initiatives, as relevant.

F. Evaluation of the Unit

1) Reflect on the methods and process used to assess the unit's outcomes detailed in Section C of this Appendix. Have they been effective? Have they or can they be improved? 2) Review the unit's

[11] For definitions, see Section A of Appendix A.

responses to Sections D through F of this Appendix and identify outstanding issues to be addressed. How will these be addressed, including the time table? 3) Describe changes the unit has made based on assessment results since the last periodic review and the impact of these changes on the delivery of services and/or the alignment of services with institutional priorities. 4) What support is needed to improve or develop the skills of the staff in the unit?

Appendix D: Periodic Review External Review Process

Team Selection

The external Review Team consists of a minimum of two individuals external to the unit undergoing review. One member must be from another institution (i.e. external to the campus). The second may be drawn from another unit on campus (internal to campus but external to the unit undergoing review). If the unit serves students, the external review team should include at least one student.

The unit head submits to the Vice Chancellor or Dean a ranked roster of nominees for approval. If the Vice Chancellor or Dean's unit is undergoing review, the roster is submitted to the Executive Vice Chancellor (EVC). For each nominee, the roster includes a) contact information, b) a brief description of relevant qualifications, and c) a description of any relationship to the unit.

Team Coordination

With roster approval, the VC, Dean or unit head coordinates the Team's review of the unit's self-study according to the timeline.

Appendix E: Example Periodic Review Timeline.

June 1: Following consultation with the Vice Chancellors (VC), Deans and SACA, the EVC sends a list of administrative units scheduled for Periodic Review (PR) to Vice Chancellors and/or Deans.

July 1: The unit head submits the roster of Review Team participants to the VC or Dean.

Oct. 15: Unit submits Self-Study to appropriate VC or Dean

Nov. 1: VC or Dean submits Self-Study to Review Team.

Feb. 1: Review Team submits assessment and recommendations to Unit and VC or Dean.

March 1: Unit submits Implementation Plan, based on results of Self-Study and Review Team Assessment to VC or Dean and EVC.

May 1: Chancellor or designate distributes a summary of the unit's review, including recommendations and action items, to unit head and SACA.

Figure 1. Generic example of Annual Assessment & Periodic Review planning and implementation.

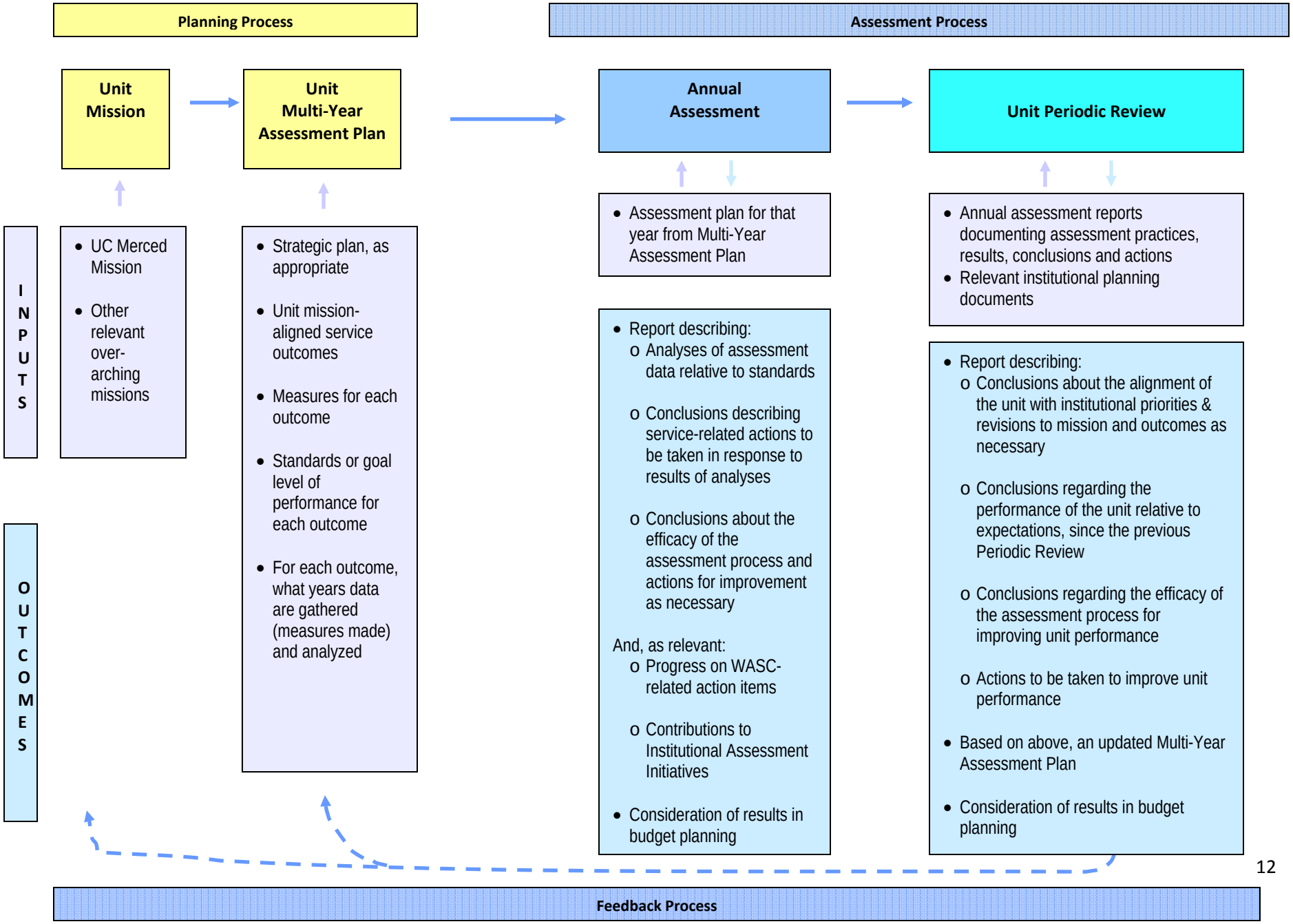
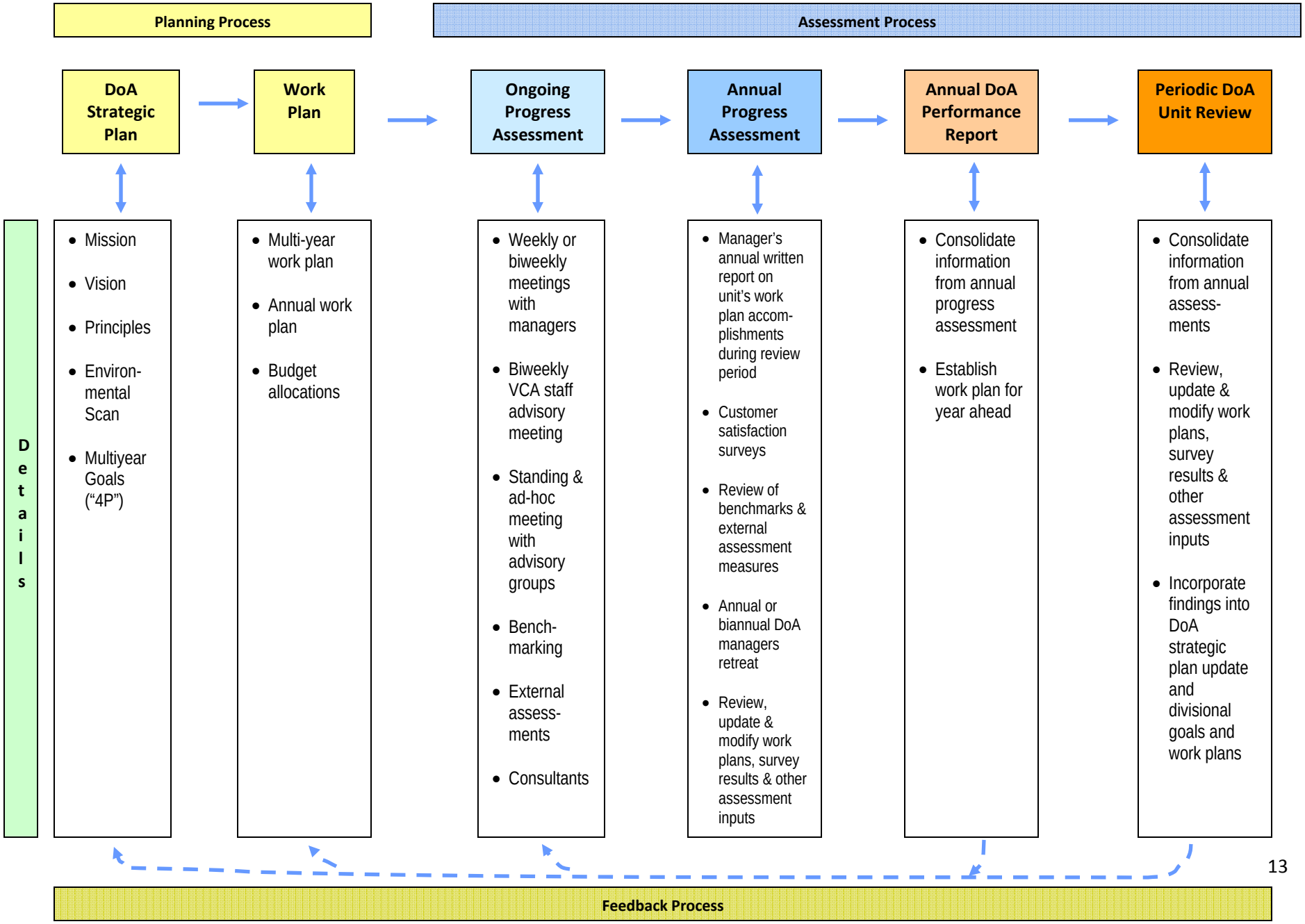
Figure 2. Division of Administration (DoA) Planning & Performance Assessment Flowchart