INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT CASE ANALYSIS

Recommendations for Strengthening Tiffin Core Assessment Communication and Closing the Loop

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Introduction

Tiffin University serves as a valuable example of how institutional assessment frameworks can enhance student learning, inform faculty decisions, prepare for accreditation, and foster ongoing improvement. This updated recommendations document emphasizes General Education, which is linked to the Tiffin Core. Public assessment resources indicate that Tiffin has an Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment, conducts annual outcomes reporting, assigns faculty responsibility for Tiffin Core assessment, and aligns with accreditation standards. However, these public sources offer more insight into the assessment process than into specific, current General Education results. Consequently, this review treats the accessible public documents as evidence of assessment activities, while noting a limitation: detailed, up-to-date Tiffin Core student learning outcomes are not readily available in public materials.

The revision strengthens the original artifact by making the recommendations more specific, actionable, and clearly connected to closing the loop. Rather than focusing solely on the existence of an assessment cycle, the revised version emphasizes how Tiffin could make General Education findings more visible, useful, and meaningful for faculty, students, administrators, and external stakeholders.

Assessment Data Analysis

Tiffin's assessment structure reflects a meaningful commitment to institutional assessment. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment coordinates assessment efforts, maintains assessment-related resources, supports annual reporting, and helps align assessment practices with accreditation expectations (Tiffin University, 2025b). Faculty are also

identified as key participants in determining learning outcomes, assessment methods, and standards for Tiffin Core outcomes (Tiffin University, 2025b). This matters because General Education assessment should support faculty judgment about student work, curriculum alignment, and learning improvement rather than serve only as a compliance requirement.

Tiffin's assessment cycle also follows a clear annual rhythm. The process includes updating assessment plans, collecting student artifacts, evaluating student work, reviewing aggregate data, and identifying recommendations for the following academic year (Tiffin University, 2025a). The annual assessment report is expected to include improvement activities, intended outcomes, assessment criteria, results, analysis, and action plans. The process also requires updating prior-year action plans in the following year's activity statement (Tiffin University, 2025a). This design is consistent with closing the loop because it moves beyond data collection toward interpretation, action, and follow-up.

The main pattern is that Tiffin's internal assessment infrastructure appears stronger than its public-facing communication of General Education findings. The annual assessment reports page demonstrates continuity and a historical record of assessment activity (Tiffin University, 2023). Yet an outside reader cannot easily see how Tiffin Core outcomes are performing over time, which outcomes need improvement, what direct evidence was used, or how prior action plans affected subsequent student learning. James Madison University's (2026) assessment guidance emphasizes that assessment results should encourage action, tell a meaningful story, and be clear for the intended audience. Piatt and Woodruff (2016) similarly frame assessment planning as a systemic, ongoing process that should support accountability, improvement, and stakeholder value.

A second pattern is the need to make evidence of student learning more visible. Tiffin's public materials reference student artifacts, rubric information, and assessment reporting, but they do not provide a concise General Education summary that shows the connections among outcomes, artifacts, scoring criteria, results, and follow-up decisions. This does not mean that Tiffin lacks such evidence internally; rather, it means that the public assessment story could be clearer. For General Education assessment, this distinction is important because students, faculty, and external stakeholders benefit when they can see how broad learning outcomes are assessed and improved.

Actionable Recommendations

First, Tiffin should publish a concise snapshot of the General Education assessment for Tiffin Core outcomes. The snapshot could identify each outcome, the direct assessment method, the performance standard, the number of artifacts or sections reviewed, the general finding, and the planned improvement action. It would not need to release sensitive student information or individual course results. Instead, it could report aggregate evidence in a format accessible to students, faculty, administrators, and accreditation reviewers. A practical format would be a one- or two-page annual summary organized by outcome, evidence source, finding, action step, and reassessment plan.

Second, Tiffin should use a consistent "findings to interpretation to action to reassessment" format in General Education reporting. Each Tiffin Core outcome report could briefly state what the evidence shows, what faculty believe it means, what change will be made, who will be responsible for the change, and when the outcome will be reassessed. This structure would make the existing assessment cycle more visible and help prevent assessment from being perceived as a one-year reporting task. It would also align with the closing-the-loop principle

that assessment findings should lead to documented decisions, implemented changes, and future evidence of whether the change improved learning.

Third, Tiffin should develop audience-specific summaries of General Education assessment results. Faculty need detailed evidence for curriculum and instruction; students need plain-language explanations of how Tiffin Core outcomes connect to communication, reasoning, professional readiness, and lifelong learning; administrators need concise reports linking learning evidence to planning and resource decisions; and external stakeholders need evidence that General Education is intentionally assessed and improved. One report need not serve every audience. A more effective approach would be to use a detailed internal report for faculty and administrators, a shorter public-facing summary for students and external audiences, and a simple visual dashboard or an annual brief that communicates major findings without unnecessary jargon.

Fourth, Tiffin should add or strengthen faculty calibration cycles for shared Tiffin Core outcomes. Because General Education outcomes are assessed across multiple courses and contexts, faculty should periodically review sample artifacts together, apply shared rubrics, discuss scoring differences, and revise rubric language as needed. This recommendation supports reliability and faculty ownership and helps ensure that assessment remains connected to teaching practice. A reasonable implementation cycle would be to hold a brief calibration session before artifact scoring each academic year, document scoring concerns, and use those notes to improve rubrics, assignment prompts, or instructional supports.

Fifth, Tiffin should connect each General Education improvement action to follow-up evidence. If the assessment finding shows that students need stronger written communication, ethical reasoning, quantitative reasoning, or information literacy support, the action plan should

specify what will change and what later evidence will show whether the change worked. Fulcher et al. (2014) argue that assessment results are only meaningfully used for improvement when a program assesses learning, implements an intervention, and then reassesses to determine whether student learning improved. Possible follow-up evidence could include rubric trends, sampled student artifacts, faculty reflections, student feedback, or targeted course-embedded performance tasks. The important point is that the institution should not stop at identifying an improvement action. It should return to the evidence after implementation and determine whether the action actually improved student learning.

Broader Implications

These recommendations would support improvement across the course, program, and institutional levels. At the course level, clearer evidence would help instructors pinpoint where students need additional practice, feedback, or support. At the program level, departments could better see how General Education outcomes reinforce major-level learning. At the institutional level, transparent closing-the-loop documentation would strengthen Tiffin's culture of evidence and provide a clearer record for accreditation, strategic planning, and continuous improvement.

The broader value is that General Education assessment becomes more than a reporting requirement. When results are communicated clearly and linked to action, students can better understand why the Tiffin Core matters; faculty can use them to refine teaching and the curriculum; and administrators can connect evidence of learning to planning and resources. This approach also helps protect the purpose of assessment. Assessment should not exist merely to prove that the institution completed a process; it should help the institution make better decisions about student learning.

Positive Conclusion

Tiffin University already has a strong assessment foundation through its Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment, annual reporting cycle, faculty responsibilities, assessment-supported evidence collection, and accreditation-aligned improvement expectations. The next opportunity is to make the Tiffin Core assessment story more visible, specific, and useful to those most affected. By strengthening direct evidence summaries, adopting a clearer findings-to-reassessment format, tailoring result communications for different stakeholders, supporting faculty calibration, and linking improvement actions to follow-up evidence, Tiffin can make General Education assessment more transparent and actionable. These revisions would help the university close the loop in a practical, documented, and student-learning-centered way.

References

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