

Closing the Loop

Using assessment results to make improvements, then checking whether they worked

"Closing the loop" means doing something with your results and then reassessing to see whether it helped. It's the step that turns assessment from reporting into improvement, and it's the step SACSCOC reviewers look for most closely.

Where it shows up in your report

Report part	What it asks	How it closes the loop
Part A: Assessment History & Rationale	When was this outcome last assessed? What did you find? What did you change?	Connects this year's work to last time's action plan.
Part C: Findings/Results	What did you find, and did you meet the target?	Shows whether past changes made a difference.
Part D: Actions for Improvement	What will you do, when, and when will you reassess?	Sets up the next turn of the loop.

What counts as an action?

An action is a specific, small change you can carry out and later check. It doesn't need to be large. Common kinds:

Kind of change	Examples
Teaching and assignments	Add a scaffolded draft step; revise assignment instructions; add practice with feedback before the graded task
Curriculum	Add the skill to an earlier course; resequence courses; adjust a prerequisite
Support and services	Change workshop content or timing; add a follow-up session; revise outreach to students who aren't using a service
Processes	Streamline a request process; add a checklist to reduce errors; adjust staffing during peak periods
The assessment itself	Revise a rubric that didn't separate strong and weak work; switch to a better-aligned measure; enlarge the sample

When the target was met

That's a good result. Note that the outcome will continue to be monitored and reassessed at its next regular interval. If the results suggest a narrower weak spot (for example, one rubric criterion lower than the rest), you might still choose a small action.

When the target wasn't met

1. Look at the details. Which criteria, groups, or items fell short?
2. Talk it over with colleagues. What might explain the pattern?
3. Choose **at least one** small, specific change.
4. Say **when** you'll make the change and **when** you'll reassess the outcome to see whether it helped.

A complete loop, in one sentence: In 2023-24, only 62% of capstone papers met the standard for using evidence; the department added a source-evaluation assignment to the junior seminar in fall 2024; when the outcome was reassessed in 2026-27, 81% met the standard. (Illustrative example.)

Keep a record

Record each action, its start date, and the planned reassessment year in one place your colleagues can see. That record is what you'll draw on for Part A next time, and it makes the departmental or program review much easier.

Created in collaboration with Claude AI.