Accreditation Assessment & Learning and the CLA+

The Office of Accreditation, Assessment and Learning (AAL) is responsible for directing the university’s assessment process, and for coordinating planning and implementation strategies for the assessment of major fields of study, general education, and academic programs. The office also serves as the primary liaison to the university's regional accrediting body, the Higher Learning Commission.

One of the main responsibilities of AAL is the coordination, administration, and communication of key assessments for the university. AAL currently oversees the administration of seven assessments, which

1. gauge student learning and practices associated with student success across students’ educational experiences,
2. assess faculty and staff experiences related to work and campus climate, and
3. provide accountability and demonstrate compliance in external reporting and accreditation processes.

The purpose of conducting these assessments is to collect the data necessary to continuously improve the Kent State student and employee experience. The CLA+ is one such assessment.

The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA+) measures critical thinking and written communication skills using performance tasks and questions, and also gauges overall student growth in these skills (e.g., analysis and problem solving, critical reading and evaluation, and writing mechanics and effectiveness). The CLA+ was developed and is overseen by the Council for Aid to Education.

Academic Affairs Strategic Plan and the CLA+

Data from the CLA+ serve as one of multiple metrics measuring Enhancing Academic Excellence and Innovation - one of six goals that comprise the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan. The plan spells out an aim to increase Kent State’s overall performance level on the CLA+.

Overall CLA+ performance is captured by value-added scores. Value-added scores are intended to capture how students’ undergraduate education experiences contribute to their higher-order skills like critical thinking. Value-added scores are calculated using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) and capture the difference between Kent State University’s actual senior mean CLA+ scores and expected senior mean CLA+ scores. Expected mean scores reflect typical senior CLA+ performance at institutions testing similar student samples, which are identified based on senior ACT/SAT scores and mean first year CLA+ performance.

Performance levels based on value-added scores are defined by the CAE as the following:

| Above +2.00: | “well above expected” |
| +2.00 to +1.00: | “above expected” |
| +1.00 to -1.00: | “near expected” |
| -1.00 to -2.00: | “below expected” |
| Below -2.00: | “well below expected” |

The table and figure below show four value-added scores. The Baseline 2013 score, highlighted in the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan, captures Kent State students’ actual total value-added score for the 2012-2013 academic...
year and a starting point for Strategic Plan projections regarding the CLA+. The -0.7 score indicates that students’ growth during the 2013 Baseline year was “near expected”, according to CAE-defined performance levels.

The second column shows Kent State students’ actual total value-added score for the 2013-2014 academic year. This -0.28 score – midway between the Baseline and Intermediate values highlighted in the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan - is classified as “near expected”. The score indicates gains in the university’s total value-added score, compared to the previous year, suggesting some movement in the direction of Strategic Plan goals.

The third column shows Kent State students’ actual total value-added score for the 2014-2015 academic year. This -0.37 score – midway between the Baseline and Intermediate values highlighted in the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan - is also classified as “near expected”. The score indicates some gains in the university’s total value-added score, compared to the previous year, again suggesting movement in the direction of Strategic Plan goals.

Finally, the fourth and fifth columns show Intermediate (2015) and Target (2018) score goals for now-current and future CLA+ performance (0.5 and 1, respectively) laid out in the Plan.

AAL will continue to track progress annually against these intermediate and target aims for CLA+ performance as one means to assess the extent to which Kent State is Enhancing Academic Excellence and Innovation in line with Academic Affairs Strategic Plan goals.