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**Abstract**

Worldwide, economic and other factors are pressing institutions of higher education to assess student learning to insure that graduates acquire the skills and competencies demanded in the 21st century. This paper summarises the status of undergraduate student learning outcomes assessment at accredited colleges and universities in the United States. Three-quarters of institutions have established learning outcomes for all their students, a necessary first step in the assessment cycle. Most schools are using a combination of institution-level and programme-level assessments. Quality assurance requirements in the form of regional and specialised accreditation, along with an institutional commitment to improve, are the primary drivers of assessment. While there is considerable assessment activity going on, it does not appear that many institutions are using the results effectively to inform curricular modifications or otherwise to enhance teaching and learning. The paper closes with recommendations for various groups that can advance the assessment and institutional improvement agenda. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)