

Graduate Programs Assessment Group

Minutes
September 13, 2006

Attendance:

Judy Bense (Anthropology), Melanie Sutton (Biology), Bruce Swain, Athena Du Pre (Communication Arts), Eman El-Shukh (Computer Science), Jay Clune (History), Kuiyuan Li (Mathematics & Statistics), Nick Power (Philosophy & Religious Studies), Doug Friedrich, Diana Robinson (Psychology), Chula King (Accounting/Finance), Laura Tissington (Teacher Education), Angelina Patten, Richard Podemski (Graduate Studies), Jane Halonen (College of Arts & Sciences), Claudia Stanny (CUTLA)

Meeting commenced at 3:05 PM

1. Claudia Stanny discussed the current status of assessments for graduate programs. We closed the 2005-2006 academic year with a good demonstration that departments made substantial progress toward developing meaningful assessment of undergraduate programs. The First Monitoring Report to SACS, which will be submitted in early October 2006, will demonstrate clear progress on the Quality Enhancement Plan and Institutional Effectiveness. Although we made significant progress and can document the collection and use of assessment data in many departments for student learning in undergraduate programs, we are not yet able to document broad collection and use of assessment data on either General Studies/Academic Foundations or Graduate Programs.

At present, most departments with graduate programs have ALPs with assessment plans posted to the CUTLA web site. A few programs still need to finalize their ALP documents and get these posted.

The plan for 2006-2007 is for each department with a graduate program to develop specific methods for the direct assessment of student learning and document the use of assessment evidence to support decision making about graduate education.

Jane Halonen added that the decision to delay assessment of general studies and graduate programs to 2006-2007 was a deliberate strategic decision to ensure that the implementation of assessment programs in three areas would be done in a manner that could be sustained.

2. Review of graduate program ALPs and assessment plans:

The University adopted the plan to create ALPs for graduate programs that follow the university structure for undergraduate ALCs (Content, Critical Thinking, Communication, Integrity/Values, and Project Management). Development and implementation of assessments for graduate programs should be facilitated by the fact that graduate programs all include capstone experiences with a tangible product that could be used effectively for assessment purposes.

Because theses and internships are projects that require effective management, the completion of this work can be easily used to assess project management as well as the other domains.

When assessing theses and internships, departments can choose among two options:

- a. **Comprehensive Model.** Create a broad rubric that will assess student learning in all of the ALP domains. The advantage of this approach is that a well-written rubric can also be useful as a guide to students in the development of their thesis or internship project, clearly describing the departmental expectations for successful, high-quality theses or internships. This approach emphasizes student learning and the rubric could be used to guide and improve the quality of the learning process.
- b. **Focused Question Model:** Departments might decide to focus on a specific question about student learning in one ALP domain. In this case, an assessment measure would be developed for student learning outcomes in that one domain (e.g., critical thinking and the use of evidence to support arguments). The data from this assessment would then be used to inform decisions the department makes about courses and/or teaching strategies intended to develop student learning in this domain. This approach emphasizes program evaluation and curriculum development.

Departments are free to select the model for assessment that best suits current goals and needs. Departments would be free to switch to a different model of assessment when these goals and needs change.

Departments should develop a direct measure for their graduate assessments.

In addition to evaluation of theses and internships, departments can obtain useful assessment data from archival data (e.g., number of students who complete the thesis or internship in the planned time frame for the degree program would be a good direct measure of project management).

Many departments with internships obtain evaluative information about student performance from internship supervisors. If supervisors are given a suitable rubric for these evaluations, data that would be useful for assessment purposes could be obtained in this way.

Departments that accept cohorts every other year will do assessments on a longer cycle (e.g., assessment of capstone products once every other year, as successive cohorts complete the program).

Departments need only develop one good direct assessment for their graduate program.

As with undergraduate ALCs, the graduate ALPs will be useful tools for advising and orienting incoming students and mid-program evaluation of student progress.

3. Establish an agreed-upon timeline for collection and report of assessment data. Department chairs believed that additional monitoring of assessment progress during the Fall term would be helpful to ensure that assessments are successfully implemented in Spring 2007. Chairs agreed to hold an additional meeting on November 1, 2006 at 3 PM to report their progress in developing assessment rubrics for use in the spring. Other aspects of the action plan for the SACS Monitoring Report appeared to be acceptable to all present.

4. Determine what departmental needs are to make this work during the fall term.

Departments asked for opportunities for individual consultations about their assessment methods. Claudia Stanny and Jane Halonen agreed to provide assistance as needed.

Note: A TIP Sheet based on questions raised during this meeting will be posted shortly.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM.

Attachments:

Revised Plan for Assessment of Graduate Programs 2006-2007

Sample Rubrics for Theses and Internships (East Caroline University; draft for Psychology)