

**General Studies / Academic Foundations
Assessment Group**

Minutes
January 12, 2007

Attendance:

Robert Philen (Anthropology), Suzette Doyon (Art), M. Karen Pritchard (Biology), Pam Tanner (Chemistry), Bruce Swain (Communication Arts), Mary Lowe Evans, Judy Young (English & Foreign Languages / Composition), Jay Clune (History), Kuiyuan Li, M. Ncube (Mathematics & Statistics), Doug Friedrich, Sam Mathews (Psychology), Charles Houghton (Theatre), Nestor Arguea (Marketing & Economics), Tom Westcott (University Advising), Jane Halonen (College of Arts & Sciences), Claudia Stanny (CUTLA)

Meeting commenced at 2:00 PM

1. Update on “Academic Bingo” as a strategy to assess student learning outcomes in Academic Foundations domains.

Claudia Stanny presented data on the distribution of assessments conducted during Fall 2006. (A copy of the matrix is appended.) We have at least one assessment embedded in nearly every cell of the student learning outcomes matrix, with the expectation that one of the empty cells (Diversity Skills) will be addressed when assessment of the multicultural courses begins. There was some discussion about whether departments might reconsider the two outcomes currently assessed and consider examining student learning for outcomes that are not currently receiving extensive assessment.

The recommendation is that it would be best for departments to focus assessment efforts on student learning outcomes that they have a specific interest, concern, or question about rather than simply trying to complete the matrix. The most useful assessments are those that answer a meaningful question about student learning for the department.

A second data analysis based on students who graduated in December, 2006 was presented to the group. SASS audits were conducted on 218 graduates (9 academic majors). The courses these students took to meet General Studies requirements were examined to determine how often these students would have experienced embedded assessments in Academic Foundations/General Studies if the current assessment process had been in place continuously. The question posed was whether the current scheme of assessing two SLOs in a subset of General Studies courses would be likely to provide a good overall picture of student learning when students have many options for meeting various General Studies requirements. The data suggest that this scheme will work well for students who complete all of their General Studies courses at UWF (only 17% of UWF graduates in this sample). However, we need to consider how this process will work for transfer students (36% of the sample) and the large number of students who complete all of their General Studies with an AA from a community college (47% of this sample). (A PDF file of summary data from this analysis is attached.)

2. SACS Response to the First Monitoring Report

The response letter from SACS to the First Monitoring Report submitted by UWF arrived this week. Claudia Stanny reviewed the response. As expected, UWF is now in compliance on all Comprehensive Standards except the two related to our ongoing assessment efforts this year. If we

continue our good progress on the assessment of Academic Foundations/General Studies and graduate programs and maintain the momentum on assessment of undergraduate programs, we should have evidence of compliance on these two standards for the Second Monitoring Report (due September 7, 2007). The serious consequences of failing to be in compliance with these Comprehensive Standards (ranging from placement on Probation through removal from membership in SACS) were discussed. (Quotation from the SACS response to the First Monitoring Report is reproduced below.)

Federal regulations and Commission policy stipulate that if an institution does not demonstrate compliance with all the standards and requirements of the *Principles of Accreditation* within two years following the Commission's initial action on the institution, representatives from the institution may be required to appear before the Commission, or one of its standing committees, to answer questions as to why the institution should not be removed from membership. If the Commission determines good cause at that time, the Commission may extend the period for coming into compliance for a minimum of six months and a maximum of two years and must place the institution on Probation. If the Commission does not determine good cause, the institution must be removed from membership.

To ensure success in meeting compliance on all Comprehensive Standards in the Second Monitoring Reports, departments need to document ongoing assessment activity and *use of assessment data for curriculum decisions* in all three academic areas: General Studies/Academic Foundations, undergraduate programs, and graduate programs. The Annual Report (due in June) will be a primary mechanism for providing information about assessment activity for the next SACS Monitoring Report.

3. Discussion of assessments

- a. Successes – evidence of student learning; rubrics and assessments that worked well.

Sam Mathews presented the work in Psychology on critical thinking and noted that students seemed to be quite successful in making the distinction between causation and correlation.

Those working on project management domains raised questions about how to get students to pay attention to time management in allocating study time. A question was raised about how we might assess student awareness of the reasons for the courses required in their major.

- b. Areas that need attention – difficulties with assessment instruments; evidence that some SLOs might need attention in the curriculum

One department discussed difficulties in getting faculty using the assessment rubric to understand that the assessment does not (and need not) be identical to the course grade. [CUTLA note: TIP Sheet 18 addresses how students with different patterns of strengths and weaknesses might earn the same overall grade on an assignment. This resource might help address this misunderstanding about the relation between assessment data and student grades.]

A suggestion was made that a long-term study of the relation between assessment data and overall course performance might be interesting.

4. Discussion regarding use of these data – what needs to be done in the next year?

Questions were raised about how assessment might be done in the Fall Term (2007). Some departments were concerned about which outcomes needed to be assessed next. Jane Halonen noted each department was free to assess those learning outcomes that the it determined it needed to assess. The choice of learning outcomes for assessment should be determined by the curiosity and questions departments have about the nature of student learning. The importance of collecting assessment data that was meaningful and useful for departmental questions about its curriculum was stressed. The most important step in the assessment process is the one in which departments make sense of what the data tell them about student learning and use this information to make decisions about their curriculum and teaching strategies.

Difficulties with shifting from one assessment focus to another from term to term were discussed. There is some value in having continuity from term to term so that departments can determine whether changes made to the curriculum have the effect intended. However, there is no value in continuing to collect assessment data on a outcome if the department determines that it has adequately addressed its current questions about this outcome. At this point, the department might want to turn attention to a different learning outcome.

There was some discussion of the difficulty in establishing continuity across instructors in the use of assessment activities and rubrics. In this case, the assessment process will be useful to initiate conversations with multiple individuals who share a course, which should help promote greater consistency across sections of the course. While it is desirable to ensure that all instructors address a common set of core student learning outcomes in a common course, this does not mean that all sections of a course must (or should) be identical. Each instructor should be able to introduce additional learning outcomes to a course while maintaining consistency in addressing common learning outcomes that define the “core” of the course.

5. Plans for assessment of Academic Foundations/General Studies in Fall 2007

Reminders:

1. Assessment of student learning in Academic Foundations/General Studies will continue in the fall term.
2. Departments should ensure that the assessment of undergraduate programs begun last year is continued through a second cycle during 2006-2007.
3. Departments with graduate programs should be attending to graduate assessment during the Spring Term, 2007.
4. Annual Reports will request information about assessment activity in all three areas, including information about how assessment evidence was used when making decisions about curriculum and teaching.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM.

Attached:

Academic Bingo Student Data Complete.pdf

Academic Foundations Domains

Distribution of Assessments, Fall 2006

Status Update: January 12, 2007 (rev. 1/18/2007)

CRITICAL THINKING	COMMUNICATION	VALUES/ INTEGRITY	PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Analysis/Evaluation BSC 1005 (Biology) CCJ 2002 (Crim. Just.) INR 202 (Government) PLA 2023 (Legal Studies) PHY 1990 (Physics) PSY 2012 (Psychology) SOW 2990 (Soc. Work) THE 2000 (Theatre) ANT 2000 (Anthropology)	Writing ENC 1101 (Composition) ENG 2101 (English)	Academic Integrity AMH 2010 (History) PHI 2100 (Philosophy)	Project Skills
Problem Solving BSC 1005 (Biology) CHM 2045 (Chemistry) ECO 2013 (Economics) MAC 1105 (Math) PHY 1020 (Physics) SPC 2016 (Comm. Arts) STA 2013 (Math)	Speaking SPC 2016 (Comm. Arts)	Personal/Cultural Values ARH 1010 (Art) ENC 1101 (Composition) ENG 2101 (English) MUH 2930 (Music) MUL 2110 (Music) SOW 2990 (Soc. Work) THE 2000 (Theatre)	Self-Regulation (deadline skills) CHM 1020 (Chemistry) PHY 1020 (Physics) PHY 1990 (Physics)
Creativity MUH 2930 (Music) MUL 2110 (Music)	Quantitative Reasoning ECO 2013 (Economics) MAC 1105 (Math) STA 2023 (Math)	Ethical Reasoning PHI 2100 (Philosophy) PLA 2023 (Legal Studies) PSY 2012 (Psychology) ANT 2000 (Anthropology)	Team Work Skills SLS 1990 (Student Life Skills) CCJ 2002 (Crim. Just.)
Info Literacy AMH 2010 (History) CPO 2002 (Government) SLS 1990 (Student Life Skills)	Tech/Visual Literacy ARH 1010 (Art) SLS 1990 (Student Life Skills)	Diversity Skills	Service Learning/ Civic Engagement POS 2041 (Government)

- Shaded areas in matrix represent the 4 Academic Foundation Domains.
- Student Learning Outcomes are listed in black in the matrix cells.
- All departments agreed to identify and assess **two** different student learning outcomes (two cells in the matrix): One SLO should be from the department's primary domain (e.g., Critical Thinking for the Social Sciences) and one SLO can come from any domain in the matrix.

Blue text in the matrix cells denotes course numbers for courses in which this SLO was scheduled to be assessed but no data have been reported to date.

Green text denotes courses that reported assessment data for Fall 2006

Reports from GLY 2010/L and GEO 1200/L were submitted but not clear which SLOs were measured

Departments with missing information:

Computer Science (entering General Studies next year)

Management

Philosophy