

2015-2016
Outcomes Assessment Report



Harper College

GoForward[®]

Overview

Outcomes assessment at Harper College is the process of collecting, analyzing and using data about student learning to focus institutional efforts on improving student achievement and the learning experience. Learning assessment at Harper is based on the following principles:

- The most effective assessment processes are faculty driven.
- Assessment is an ongoing process that leads to change and improvement.
- Assessment is never perfect.
- Academic freedom can be maintained while engaged in assessment.
- Assessment is not a task solely performed as a requirement of accrediting agencies; the reason for assessment is improvement.
- Assessment is not linked to faculty evaluation and results will not be used punitively.
- The use of data to support change leads to the most meaningful improvements.
- Course-embedded assessment is the most effective authentic method of conducting assessment.
- Assessment raises as many questions as it answers.
- Assessment focuses the attention of the College on continuous quality improvement.

The Nichols five-column model of assessment has been adopted by Harper College. This model organizes the assessment process by guiding programs and departments through the process of developing an assessment plan, collecting evidence of student learning, communicating results and developing data-based action plans focused on continuous improvement. The five columns represent the following:

- Identifying the program or department mission (Column 1)
- Defining outcomes (Column 2)
- Selecting assessment measures and establishing the criteria for success (Column 3)
- Implementation and data collection (Column 4)
- Using assessment results to improve student learning or department quality (Column 5)

Academic course-level and program-level assessment, as well as student support and administrative services assessment follow an annual cycle in which the plan for assessment is developed during the fall semester, the assessment is conducted during the spring semester and assessment results and improvement plans are completed upon return the following fall semester (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Assessment Process

ANNUAL OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PROCESS		
PLANNING Column 1 – Mission Statement Column 2 – Student Learning Outcomes Column 3 – Means of Assessment and Criteria for Success	October	Meet with Dean to review findings and initiatives from previous cycle and discuss interventions and resources needed to initiate changes – initial planning for current cycle.
	November	Work with Outcomes Assessment Office to create assessment plan.
	December	Submit Assessment Plan (columns 1-3) in TracDat. Assessment plan includes mission statement, learning outcomes, means of assessment and criteria for success. Plan for assessment shared with the program faculty. (Dean sign-off)
IMPLEMENTATION	Mid-January to mid-May	Implement assessment plans.
ASSESSMENT Collect, analyze and interpret data Column 4 - Results Column 5 - Use of Results	Mid-January to mid-May	Data collection throughout academic semester.
	May to September	Analysis of assessment data. Data collected is analyzed to identify trends, areas for improvement, and to generate initiatives to improve student learning. Discuss results with department faculty.
	September to early October	Enter data and use of results (columns 4-5) in TracDat. Columns 1-5 completed.
CLOSING THE LOOP Initiate appropriate changes Report findings to appropriate constituents	October	Meet with Dean to review findings and initiatives from previous cycle and discuss interventions and resources needed to initiate changes – initial planning for current cycle. New assessment cycle begins. Incorporate revisions from last year. Record these revisions in the action taken section of the previous year’s results.

Course-Level Outcomes Assessment

Academic departments without AAS degrees or certificates of 30 hours or more participated in the course-level assessment process.¹ In 2015-16, the total number of academic departments involved in course-level outcomes assessment was 26. Table 2 contains information about the outcomes assessment activities of these departments.

Table 2 – Course Outcomes Assessment Analysis, 2015-16

Assessment Submissions	Number of Departments (%)
Documented consultations*	26/26 (100%)
Assessment Plan submitted (Columns 1-3)	26/26 (100%)
Assessment Report submitted (Columns 4-5)	25/26 (96%)
Results	Number of Items (%)
Outcomes process issues	3/82 (4%)
Criteria met, no further action	17/82 (21%)
Criteria met, action taken	13/82 (16%)
Criteria not met, action taken	49/82 (60%)
Total Assessments	82/82 (100%)

*Includes meetings, working e-mails, and working phone calls.

Of the 26 departments engaging in course-level assessment in 2015-16, 25 (96%) completed the full outcomes assessment cycle, an increase from 88% in 2014-15. There were also significantly fewer outcomes process issues in 2015-16 (3) than 2014-15 (22).

Actions for improving student achievement of outcomes continue to be identified. Data indicate that 62 of the 82 course-level assessment results (76%) led to improvements in course content, pedagogy or assessment methods. Following are samples of action plans that were created to improve student learning as a result of course-level assessment findings.

Humanities—HUM101 and HUM120

The Humanities department experimented with two different types of assessments in spring 2016, a quiz in HUM101 and a written assignment in HUM120. Although the quiz was developed through collaboration across the department, collecting and analyzing the results was found to be overly burdensome on department faculty. The HUM120 written assignment on the other hand, yielded valuable information, including ideas for improving the process used for the written assessment. The assessment and process were updated for implementation in fall 2016.

¹Some departments conducted formal assessments at both the program and the course level: Accounting, Business Administration, Computer Information Systems, and Law Enforcement and Justice Administration.

Law Enforcement and Justice Administration—LEJ101

Longitudinal results showed students had difficulty with certain assessment questions in each iteration of the LEJ101 assessment, despite efforts to improve students' learning in those areas. The department revised the assessment questions effective fall 2015, which led to an improvement in scores. For example, correct responses to one question improved by nearly 20 percentage points after the assessment was revised.

Physics—PHY201

Although students met the criterion for success for the PHY201 lab assessment, their performance on the lab was low in comparison to other assessments. Department faculty discussed this result, hypothesizing that the lower scores may be due to the location of the assessment—an unfamiliar lab with unfamiliar equipment. The assessment will be moved to a lab students have previously used, and the department will compare results over time.

Student Development—PSY107

The results of the PSY107 course assessment showed that 88% (42/48) of students were able to cite and/or quote several student presentations that were meaningful to them. The students were also able to reflect on at least three points interwoven from the class presentations to their own personal and/or academic challenges. Additionally, course faculty received positive feedback from students regarding the benefits of the assignment in relation to their learning process. The positive results and feedback led the department to continue with the assignment in the course despite moving to a different project for the purposes of learning assessment.

Career Program Outcomes Assessment

Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees, various certificate programs, developmental math, and English as a Second Language are involved in academic program outcomes assessment activities. During the 2015-16 academic year, 37 total academic programs/departments were involved in program-level outcomes assessment. However, two AAS programs were unable to participate in the outcomes assessment process due to low enrollment. Table 3 contains an analysis based on the outcomes assessment activities of these programs/departments.

Table 3 – Program Outcomes Assessment Analysis, 2015-16

Assessment Submissions	Number of Programs (%)
Programs unable to assess due to low enrollment	2* (these programs not included in data)
Documented consultations**	37/37 (100%)
Assessment Plan submitted (Columns 1-3)	37/37 (100%)
Assessment Report submitted (Columns 4-5)	37/37 (100%)
Results	Number of Items (%)
Outcomes process issues	13/207 (6%)
Criteria met, no further action	79/207 (38%)
Criteria met, action taken	76/207 (37%)
Criteria not met, action taken	39/207 (19%)
Total Assessments	207/207 (100%)

* CIS – Software Development and Sign Language Interpreting

**Includes meetings, working e-mails, and working phone calls.

In comparison to 2014-15 data, the completion rates of columns 1-5 have increased, with 100% of programs completing the full outcomes assessment cycle in 2015-16. Data indicate that 115 of the 207 assessment results (56%) were used to improve course content, pedagogy or assessment methods. Following are samples of action plans that were created to improve student learning as a result of program-level assessment findings.

Dental Hygiene

The department conducted a direct assessment of students' sub-gingival exploring skills in both DHY101 and DHY151. However, the rubric scoring methodology led to results that were difficult to assess on an individual basis. The department took part in a faculty calibration activity to address the rubric scoring issues. The activity involved videotaping students performing certain tasks, and then working as a faculty group to calibrate the rubrics based on those videotapes. The department expects that involvement in this activity will result in more precise and informative assessment data in the future.

Developmental Math

In spring 2015, the department implemented experimental sections of modularized teaching in MTH055. After multiple semesters of collecting and comparing student success information, the department found no significant difference between the control group and the experimental group in MTH055. Therefore, the department discontinued the modules in spring 2016 and focused on revision of other portions of the developmental math sequence.

Nursing

As part of its assessment work, the Nursing department completed an analysis comparing Harper student performance to state and national NCLEX pass rates. Although Harper's Nursing program results have exceeded both state and national pass rates, Nursing faculty determined they want Harper students to maintain a benchmark above those rates (95%). In order to reach that goal, Nursing faculty are placing additional focus on NCLEX preparation in theory courses and on theory exams.

Welding

The department learned that only 66% of eligible students were able to pass the American Welding Society SENSE exam on the first attempt. In response to this assessment finding, the department implemented the "Tooling U" online e-learning platform, which enables students to interactively learn on their own schedules from any Internet device. Additionally, the department implemented "Open Lab Fridays," where students can get additional one-on-one help from an instructor or practice skills they can only perform in the lab.

General Education Outcomes Assessment

Quantitative Reasoning

During the 2015-16 academic year, the Learning Assessment Committee and the General Education-Quantitative Reasoning Work Group conducted an assessment of quantitative reasoning across the College. In fall 2015, the Work Group convened to develop an assessment instrument that would facilitate involvement from faculty members who teach quantitative reasoning within their Harper courses. The assessment focused on reading and evaluating graphs and tables, identified as primary skills needed to meet the Quantitative Reasoning outcome.

After developing the assessment tool, the Work Group randomly sampled class sections that had high populations of students who were nearing graduation (those who had earned 45+ credit hours). The sample also focused on courses that align with the Quantitative Reasoning outcome. The five-question assessment tool was modified by instructors to fit the content of individual courses. A total of 865 assessments were analyzed, and the tables below show the high-level results.

Table 4 – Overall Spring 2016 Quantitative Reasoning Results

	Students with 45+ credit hours (N=351)	All students (N=865)
Question 1: Graph reading	64.1%	62.3%
Question 2: Graph evaluation	84.3%	83.7%
Question 3: Graph reading	87.2%	84.6%
Question 4: Table reading	93.4%	91.7%
Question 5: Table evaluation	70.4%	71.9%
Students correctly answering 4 or 5 questions	76.1%	73.1%

Of the five questions on the assessment, students scored lowest when asked to read and compare two graphs (Question 1), with 62.3% of students correctly answering this question. The assessment also found that certain student characteristics were correlated with higher scores on the assessment. For example, students who had successfully completed two or more Math, Physical Science or Life Science degree requirements performed better than students who had completed one or fewer of these requirements.

Upon review of these results, improvement planning related to graph reading and interpretation was scheduled for 2016-17.

Information Literacy

In 2015-16, the General Education-Information Literacy Work Group and the Learning Assessment Committee shared the results of the 2014-15 Information literacy assessment. Results were communicated through a session during Orientation Week, posting on the Harper Intranet Portal (HIP), the Assess for Success newsletter, and meetings with Library faculty. Overall, scores and feedback related to the assessment were positive; however the Work Group determined there was room for improvement.

The Work Group developed an Information Literacy Improvement Plan that included a focus on faculty and staff communications related to Information Literacy and an expanded assessment for implementation in 2017-18. In conjunction with the General Education-Writing Work Group and the College's Student Communications Manager, the Work Group also planned improvements in communicating general education information with students for implementation in 2016-17.

Student Support and Administrative Services Outcomes Assessment

During the 2015-16 academic year, 39 total student support and administrative units took part in the outcomes assessment process. Units from across all non-academic divisions participated, such as Health Services, the Business Office and Institutional Research. Table 5 contains an analysis based on the outcomes assessment activities of these programs/units.

Table 5 – Student Support and Administrative Services Outcomes Assessment Analysis, 2015-16

Assessment Submissions	Number of Programs (%)
Documented consultations*	27/39 (69%)
Assessment Plan submitted (Columns 1-3)	39/39 (100%)
Assessment Report submitted (Columns 4-5)	39/39 (100%)
Results	Number of Items (%)
Outcomes process issues	7/114 (6%)
Criteria met, no further action	30/114 (26%)
Criteria met, action taken	42/114 (37%)
Criteria not met, action taken	35/114 (31%)
Total Assessments	114/114 (100%)

* Includes meetings, working e-mails, and working phone calls.

In 2015-16, 100% of units completed the full assessment cycle for the second year in a row. Although many departments complete their assessment work without requiring consultation with the Outcomes Assessment Office, the office continues to support all non-instructional areas through online materials, assessment handbooks, drop-in sessions, and individual consultations on an as-needed basis.

More than 67% of non-instructional assessments led to improvements in services, programs or other operations, a slight increase from 65% in 2014-15. Following are samples of plans and actions as a result of assessment findings.

Athletic Programs

Athletics developed a goal of increasing the number of counseling appointments student athletes attend and decreasing the number of missed appointments. The department implemented an enhanced communication strategy to engage students, including increased involvement by the Athletic Academic Coordinator in the Student Athlete Success Center, appointment scheduling through the counselors and the Student Affairs staff, and reminder calls to student athletes on the day prior to their appointment. The department attained a 10% increase in counseling appointments by athletes with the Athletic Academic Counselors from 2014-15 to 2015-16, a 31% decrease in no shows, and a 66% decrease in unfilled slots for counselor appointments.

Event Management

The Event Management department contacted rental clients to determine their satisfaction with Harper's Event Management services and equipment as well as ideas for future services and equipment. Although users rated Harper's services and facilities as good or excellent, the sound system in the Performing Arts Center was noted as an area of concern. Some users noted difficulties with the system that were addressed at the time of their events and indicated that there was equipment within the system that needed replacement. Therefore, department staff worked with other campus departments to develop a solution to the issue for implementation in 2016-17.

Student Financial Assistance

The Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) focused on student loan education for students and staff. Education included a presence at campus events such as Hullabaloo, financial literacy games during tours for 5th to 8th graders, and "Got Money" financial literacy information tables. Staff in both OSFA and One Stop participated in loan training sessions, webinars and workshops. Additionally, targeted communications were delivered to first-time borrowers, current Harper borrowers, and students who were no longer enrolled in at least six hours at Harper. Free debt management and financial literacy resources such as "IonTuition" were also promoted to students.

Women's Program

The Women's Program and the Center for New Students and Orientation collaborated to provide 15 targeted workshops to support new adult students. Topics included use of prior credit, balancing family and school, stress reduction and wellness, and transferring/educational planning. In total, 85 students attended the sessions, and evaluation feedback was positive. Students identified a need for an ongoing support group for adult students and requested support in addressing placement testing and career direction concerns in more detail. These findings informed future programming. An on-going support group (Adult Connections) was launched, and plans were made to continue the successful workshop series, including a focus on prospective student and placement testing support.

Other Assessment Efforts at Harper College

In addition to the assessment processes and outcomes analyses described above, the College has continued its assessment efforts in 2015-16 through:

- The 20th Annual Illinois Community College Assessment Fair, which was held in conjunction with Harper's Annual Assessment Conference and Share Fair on February 26, 2016. Over 250 community college colleagues from across the state attended the day-long Fair, including approximately 100 Harper attendees. The Assessment Fair featured assessment expert Peter T. Ewell, President at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), who presented the keynote "Assessing Assessment: Successes, Failures and the Future." Breakout sessions included topics on student services and administrative assessment, assessment and accreditation, assessment best practices, faculty development in assessment and general education assessment.
- The Outcomes Assessment Faculty Fellowship program. Nellie Khalil (Biology) completed her fellowship and presented her results at the Assessment Fair's poster session: "Evaluating Whether General Biology Knowledge Affects Student Performance in Human Anatomy and Microbiology Courses." Therese Hart (Humanities) was chosen as the Assessment Fellow for calendar year 2016.
- An online faculty course entitled "Learning Assessment: Utilizing Student Outcomes Data to Inform and Share Your Instructional Strategies." The purpose of the course was to introduce faculty members to methods and strategies for designing, administering and using the results of effective formative assessments.
- Assess for Success newsletters, which are designed to share academic assessment information across the campus. Newsletters can be found on the Assessing Our Students and Assessing Our College pages of the Harper Intranet Portal (HIP).
- Outcomes Assessment Office support of faculty and staff assessment efforts, including individual consultations, workshops, drop-in sessions, and development and updates to assessment handbooks and online support materials.