

2012-2013
Outcomes Assessment Report

March 2014



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 program-level and course-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 Timeline

ANNUAL OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT TIMELINE			
PLANNING			
	Column 1 – Mission Statement	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.
	Column 2 – Student Learning Outcomes	November	Work with Outcomes Assessment Office to create assessment plan.
Column 3 – Means of Assessment and Criteria for Success	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	Mid-January to mid-May	Data collection throughout academic semester.
	Column 4 - Results Column 5 - Use of Results	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	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.
Report findings to appropriate constituents		New assessment cycle begins.	
		Incorporate revisions from last year. Record these revisions in the action taken section of the previous year’s results.	

Career Program Outcomes Assessment

Participation in the outcomes assessment process has become a sustainable part of the Harper College culture. Involved in the academic program outcomes assessment activities are all Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees, various certificate programs, developmental math, English as a Second Language, and the Department of Academic Success (developmental English and reading).

During the 2012-13 academic year, the total number of academic programs/departments involved in program-level outcomes assessment was 39. This number represents four certificate programs, English as a Second Language, developmental English and reading, developmental math and the 34 AAS degree programs. However, two of the AAS programs were unable to participate in the outcomes assessment process due to a transition or low enrollment. Table 2 contains an analysis based on the outcomes assessment activities of these programs/departments.

Table 2 – Program Outcomes Assessment Analysis, 2012-13

Assessment Submissions	Number of Programs (%)
Programs unable to assess due to new status or low enrollment	2* (these programs not included in data)
Documented consultations**	39/39 (100%)
Columns 1-3 submitted	39/39 (100%)
Columns 4-5 submitted	34/39 (87%)
Results	Number of Items (%)
Outcomes process issues	9/190 (5%)
Criteria met, no further action	69/190 (36%)
Criteria met, action taken	49/190 (26%)
Criteria not met, action taken	63/190 (33%)
Total Assessments	190/190 (100%)

* CIS – Software Development and Public Relations

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

As compared with 2011-12 data, the completion rates of columns 1-5 have remained fairly steady, with 34 programs completing the full outcomes assessment cycle in 2012-13. Additionally, programs continue to identify actions for improving student achievement of outcomes in the use of results area. Data indicate that 112 of the 190 assessment results (59%) identified ways to improve to course content, pedagogy or assessment methods. Interesting to note is that of these improvements, 44% occurred even though the criteria for success were met.

Following are samples of action plans that were created to improve student learning as a result of assessment findings.

Business Administration

Assessment results showed that students were relatively weak in the mechanics and grammar portions of their written projects. When working toward completion of these projects, the department is increasing the focus on writing and mechanics as well as student analytical skills. This focus will include an increased use of formative assessment techniques to help improve students' writing and analysis capabilities over the course of the semester.

Early Childhood Education

Assessment results showed that students were having difficulty meeting the criteria set for program outcomes related to certain NAEYC standards. To address this concern, the program is updating and aligning assessments and rubrics with current NAEYC, Gateways and IPTS standards. Additionally, faculty members are increasing the focus on written and verbal skills assessments.

Paraprofessional Educator

Based on assessment results, the department is adopting new textbooks as well as required course artifacts in order to focus more specifically on the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards and improve the outcome "Identify technology tools/media used in the classroom to enhance teaching and learning." One new textbook includes an emphasis on socio-economic issues as they relate to student use of technology. Another integrates use of technology to enhance teaching and learning throughout a number of chapters.

Radiologic Technology

Based on assessment results, improvement of the outcome "Critique radiographs" is needed. In order to improve the outcome, additional lab tutors will be hired to assist students with film critiques. Additionally, the advisory committee suggested that the first semester benchmark be lowered, because the film critique assignment is very difficult for new students to fully understand. Many do not grasp the concept until midterm first semester.

Course-Level Outcomes Assessment

During the 2012-13 academic year, academic departments not engaged in program-level assessment participated in the course-level assessment process.¹ To assist faculty in this process, training sessions and one-on-one consultations were provided on writing course outcomes, using embedded assessments in their courses, or other aspects of Harper College's outcomes assessment process.

Although course-level assessment has been occurring in academic departments for many years, the 2012-13 academic year represented the initial use of standardized reporting of course-level assessment plans and results. Departments completed a form describing their assessment activities for the year (see Appendix). Many departments spent the year revising and developing appropriate course-level outcomes, while others were further along in the process and completed a full cycle of assessment. The total number of departments involved in course-level outcomes assessment was 25. Table 3 contains an analysis based on the outcomes assessment activities of these departments.

Table 3 – Course Outcomes Assessment Analysis, 2012-13

Assessment Submissions	Number of Departments (%)
Documented consultations*	24/26 (92%)
Form submitted	25/26 (96%)
Completed full cycle of assessment	11/26 (42%)
Results	Number of Items (%)
Outcomes process issues	7/37 (19%)
Wrote/revised outcomes	9/37 (24%)
Wrote/revised assessment tool	10/37 (27%)
Criteria met, no further action	2/37 (5%)
Criteria met, action taken	2/37 (5%)
Criteria not met, action taken	7/37 (19%)
Total Activities/Assessments	37/37 (100%)

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

As expected, not all departments were able to complete a full assessment cycle. In the 2013-14 cycle departments will move from a focus on revising outcomes and refining assessment processes to completing the full cycle of assessment and using results for improvements. The

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.

Outcomes Assessment Office is working with these departments to improve results for 2013-14. In future cycles, course-level outcomes assessment cycle reporting will occur via TracDat and will parallel program-level reporting.

General Education Outcomes Assessment

The General Education Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee, a subcommittee of the Institutional Outcomes Assessment Committee (IOAC), has been setting the agenda for the assessment of general education learning outcomes across the curriculum. Each year, the General Education Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee focuses on one of the 12 general education learning outcomes. An assessment plan for the coming academic year is typically established each spring by the committee. Plans for curriculum or teaching improvements are also completed during the spring semester for implementation in the coming academic year.

During the 2012-13 academic year, the General Education Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee continued its work with Written Communication. The subcommittee analyzed the results of the 2011-12 Writing Across the Curriculum project, which focused on the general education outcome:

- Communicate effectively and persuasively in writing.

In analyzing the results from the spring 2012 writing project, the subcommittee determined an additional year of data collection would be necessary to truly understand whether students were meeting the general education outcome. A key challenge identified by the team was the lack of consistency in the type (e.g., narrative vs. argumentative) of essay collected. The team collected embedded assessments from volunteer faculty members as samples for this project. While this provided the team with a useable sample of essays, the variation in assignments made applying the rubric challenging. Thus, the committee used 2012-13 as a planning year for an additional writing assessment project to be completed in 2013-14. Changes to the writing project included rubric improvements, additional outreach to faculty, and workshops designed to ensure prompts were more consistent across instructors. Information about the results of this project will be available in the 2013-14 Outcomes Assessment Report.

Student Support and Administrative Services Outcomes Assessment

During the 2012-13 academic year, the total number of student support and administrative units involved in outcomes assessment was 40. This included units that were part of each non-academic division, such as Health Services, the Business Office and Institutional Research. One of these units, the Educational Foundation, was excused from assessment due to changes in leadership within that unit. Table 4 contains an analysis based on the outcomes assessment activities of these programs/units.

Table 4 – Student Support and Administrative Services Outcomes Assessment Analysis, 2012-13

Assessment Submissions	Number of Programs (%)
Excused from assessment	1* (this unit not included in data)
Documented consultations**	27/39 (69%)
Columns 1-3 submitted	39/39 (100%)
Columns 4-5 submitted	36/39 (92%)
Results	Number of Items (%)
Outcomes process issues	2/108 (2%)
Criteria met, no further action	38/108 (35%)
Criteria met, action taken	41/108 (38%)
Criteria not met, action taken	27/108 (25%)
Total Assessments	108/108 (100%)

* Educational Foundation

**Includes meetings, working e-mails, etc.

As compared with 2012-13 data, the completion rates of columns 1-5 have increased from 77% to 92% with 36 units completing the full assessment cycle in 2012-13. More than 60% of the assessments conducted led to improvements in service, programs, or other operations.

Units continue to improve the action plans they develop; following are samples of plans and actions as a result of assessment findings.

Access and Disability Services

Access and Disability Services (ADS) worked to improve on-boarding and transition processes to increase the percentage of prospective students that become active with ADS. A number of strategic initiatives and decisions made by the ADS team resulted in much more targeted messaging to prospective students with disabilities, as well as better follow-up throughout on-boarding that helped encourage more students to complete their student files for ADS. The team planned additional review of these outcomes to prepare for 2013-14.

Center for Multicultural Learning

In assessing the outcome “Students participating in the R.E.A.C.H. (Retention Efforts for Academic Completion at Harper) Summer Bridge Program will be able to identify increased awareness of success strategies useful in transitioning from high school to college,” the Center for Multicultural Learning found that students consistently stated "change" or "significant change" in the four areas key to student transition from high school to college. Students exceeded the desired outcomes in two areas: become familiar with campus resources and understand Harper's educational policies and procedures. Both areas were critical changes to the two-week program instituted for R.E.A.C.H. in 2011. Based on these results, the R.E.A.C.H. team planned to evaluate the content and/or engagement activities being provided to encourage identifying reasons for being in college and feeling a sense of community and belonging. These two transitional elements are harder to emphasize as they are "personal" in nature and harder to discern than navigating the College system.

Human Resources

In assessing the outcome “Human Resources promotes a diverse workforce,” the department found there were no documented complaints of bias/discrimination during the exit interview process. However, the department plans to continue to promote a diverse workforce by ensuring accuracy of these results through utilization of a third-party vendor to administer the exit interview assessment in the future.

Success Services

Success Services oversaw a pilot Supplemental Instruction program. Eight faculty members in 15 spring semester classes participated in the program. Based on the success of the pilot, Supplemental Instruction will be implemented as a program during Fall 2013.

Other Assessment Efforts at Harper College

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

- The 4th Annual Assessment Conference and Share Fair, which took place on Friday, March 8, 2013. The Conference featured Dr. Catherine Wehlburg, Assistant Provost for Institutional Effectiveness at Texas Christian University, who spoke about using assessment results to make a difference for students. Other presentation and poster topics included Summative Course Assessment, Measuring Learning Outcomes with Embedded Assessments, Course-Level Outcomes Assessment in the Oral Communication Classroom, and an update on the General Education Outcomes Assessment Writing Assessment Pilot. Follow-up materials can be found on the Assessment section of the employee portal.
- The Outcomes Assessment Faculty Fellowship program. Fellows for 2012-13 were Kurt Neumann (English) and Pascuala Herrera (Access and Disability Services). Fellowship final reports can be found on the Assessment section of the employee portal.
- Assess for Success newsletters, which are designed to share academic assessment information across the campus. Newsletters can be found on the Assessment section of the employee portal.
- The Institutional Outcomes Assessment Committee (IOAC), the purpose of which is to champion outcomes assessment at Harper College by promoting a culture of evidence and continuous improvement, supporting the assessment activities of the College, and engaging the entire College community in the outcomes assessment process.
- 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 other materials.

Appendix

Course Assessment Report Form

Answer the following questions to describe the department's course assessment activities during the 2012-2013 academic year.

Please contact your dean or Faon Grandinetti (x6356) with any questions. Please return this form to Outcomes Assessment by October 15, 2013 (fgrandin@harpercollege.edu or Mail Code INST OUTCOMES).

In what course(s) was assessment conducted?

Were the learning outcomes for the course revised, and if so, in what way?

Which learning outcomes were selected for assessment?

Was an assessment tool developed or was an existing method of assessment used? Please describe.

Were all sections of the course assessed? If not, how did you choose which sections would participate?

What did the assessment results indicate?

How do you plan to use these results for improvement?