



The Assessment Times For Students

Fall 2011

Busy as Usual...

As is our long-established custom, we have a number of different things we are working on currently. They are:

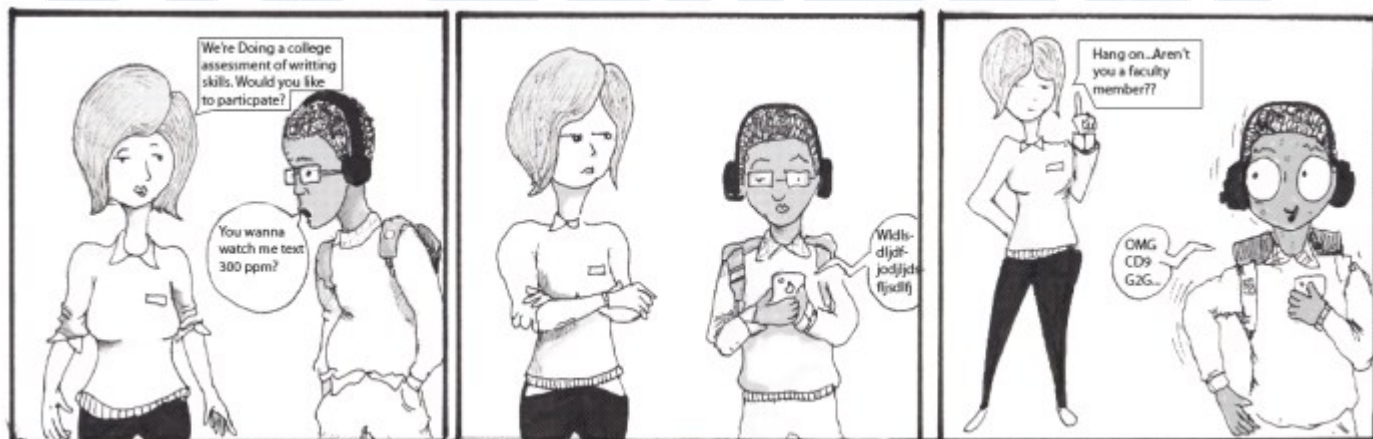
1. Data analysis and report writing for the Social Science Assessment. Numbers are being crunched, and the writing process has begun.
2. Distribution and dialogue about our Quantitative Reasoning Report. We are working on an Assessment Brief – to put key findings in every one's hands.
3. Website update. We have a whole new design, and we are uploading and organizing all kinds of things to show the substance of HWC's Assessment Committee work to the wider world.
4. Collecting, processing and grading 1,000 student writing samples for our Effective Writing assessment. Many of you contributed your anonymous work to this effort—thanks for helping us understand more about our students' writing.
5. Future Planning – we have reached a watershed mark, where we have assessed all seven of our General Education Goals and their respective student learning outcomes. So we are now looking to a long-term future plan about how we conduct our work. In fact, we are reviewing everything!

Committee members are permanently grateful to all the faculty, staff and students that consistently contribute to this important work.

Michael Heathfield - Chair Assessment Committee

Our 'Charge' or 'Why We Do What We Do'

The HWC Assessment Committee is dedicated to the improvement of student learning through the meaningful utilization of assessment data in an effort to support the HWC community toward the evolution of college curriculum. As outlined in this charge, the HWC Assessment Committee is committed to defining assessment at Harold Washington College, as establishing and ensuring that appropriate assessment procedures and practices are followed in collecting, reviewing, analyzing and disseminating information/data on assessment. Finally, the HWC Assessment Committee is responsible for providing a forum for dialogue regarding assessment issues to support a college culture, which includes the assessment process.



Many thanks to our student cartoonist - Arturo Lopez and John Masden of the Art Department

The Assessment Committee Web Site

Did you know that you can see many aspects of the Assessment Program at HWC via our web site? It can be found at: <http://sites.google.com/site/hwcassessment/>

Almost 200 Years Later Sir William Curtis's Three Rs are Still the Fundamental Foundation for Education

One might expect that if a student self-identifies as being very comfortable in mathematics, that he or she would perform well on a mathematics examination. This seemed fairly straightforward when we were analyzing the mathematics assessment data for our Fall 2011 Quantitative Reasoning Report. However, none of us predicted that it would be as significant as the data showed. We saw a statistically significant increase in examination scores with each level that students identified as their mathematics 'comfort'. This was actually a better indicator than the number of credit classes a student completed.

We are working on our Social Science Assessment Report right now. Naturally, when we analyzed our social science data we expected similar results. This was not the case. Although we have yet to dive in to how significant the differences are, at first glance it appears students who are comfortable reading, especially at the higher levels required in literature courses, performed the best in a task where they were asked to identify a social science discipline being discussed in a conversation.

In this examination, students read a fabricated conversation between two social scientists. Each social scientist works in the same discipline, and the student had to determine which discipline they work in from key terms and concepts in the conversation. It was speculated that the level of comfort students feel about a social sciences discipline would correlate with their performance in this examination as it had done in mathematics.

However, these results show evidence that students' level of comfort in reading and especially critical reading correlate best with this task, much more than their comfort with social science.

This was a surprising result that we believe will engender a great deal of discussion in both the assessment committee and in the social sciences. So reading skills become important in all areas of the curriculum. When we conduct assessments of student learning outcomes, we need to be constantly aware of how reading and comprehension can impact responses that students provide. Strong reading and comprehension skills are important keys to success in all disciplines.

How comfortable are you with your reading skills?

Effective Writing

Many of you may have participated in our Effective Writing Assessment over these past couple of weeks. Faculty from across most of the disciplines has been busy collecting writing samples from you so that the college can assess the following three student learning outcomes:

Students will be able to:

1. Compose texts across multiple disciplines and for various audiences, occasions, and purposes.
2. Construct texts for communication, information, and expression which adhere to the rules of Standard Written English.
3. Compose texts that are focused, well-organized, and well-developed.

We also asked you to complete a short demographic survey that asked a variety of questions about you, your background and your feelings and sentiments about writing and the writing process—we know this information will help us to analyze your writing skills.

We've got a lot of reading to do over the winter hiatus! Hopefully, we will have some early results for you during the spring semester.

Are YOU interested in joining our Assessment Committee?

Any questions about becoming a member of the committee or about anything else concerning assessment at HWC, please contact Michael Heathfield, Chair @ mheathfield@ccc.edu (office 712) or Jennifer Asimow, Vice-Chair @ jasimow@ccc.edu.