

Harold Washington College Assessment Program

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Jan Vermeer: Woman Weighing Pearls

This is the home page for the HWC Assessment Program. Here you can find information about the activities, goals, plans and results of the program.

You can contact the committee by clicking here: [WRITE TO US.](#)

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Harold Washington College Assessment Program Activities

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During the Fall of 1999, departments were notified of their new responsibilities for assessment. Each department reported to the committee on the type of assessment it intended to conduct, the relationship between its assessment instrument and the General Education Objectives relevant to its subject area, and the course(s) that would be assessed. The Assessment Records software was installed in department offices, and during Spring 2000, the new assessment program got underway.

Under the new program, the process of assessment is a cyclical one which spans four semesters:

Semester 1 Full-time faculty meet to decide on the "assessment instrument" to be used during the next semester. The department may choose to use a nationally recognized "standard exam" if one is available, but most often this is not the case, and faculty must work out a common exam (and a common scoring rubric) of their own design. Once the instrument has been prepared, senior faculty consider whether adjunct faculty will need any special instruction in how to administer and score the exam. A report describing (any changes to) the department's assessment procedures is forwarded to the HWC Assessment Committee.

Semester 2 Adjunct faculty are instructed (as necessary) and the exam is administered in all sections of the course in question. Results are recorded by instructors and collated by the department.

Semester 3 Full-time faculty meet to review and analyze the results of the previous semester's assessment exam (and, where possible, to compare them to results from previous semesters). At this time changes may be proposed to the course outline, reading list etc. Also the faculty may consider changes in the design of the assessment instrument. A report of this meeting is forwarded to the HWC Assessment Committee.

Semester 4 Curricular changes (based on assessment results) are implemented.

This cycle begins anew each semester and, as the program proceeds, a given department will find itself at different points in as many as four over-lapping cycles. This might sound like an open door to confusion, but in fact it is simply a natural consequence of making assessment a part of the culture of the college. At the time of this writing, we are nearing the end of the first four-semester cycle, and already there is concrete evidence of how the program is reshaping HWC's course offerings.

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The primary goal of the HWC Assessment Program is to monitor the fulfillment of the General Education Objectives of the college. These objectives mandate that students should be able to:

Think critically, analyze and solve problems.

Communicate effectively, orally and in writing.

Use mathematics for computation, reasoning, and problem solving.

Understand cultures, institutions, patterns of human behavior and the application of the scientific method to their study.

Understand the major principles of the natural sciences and the application of the scientific method to biological, physical and environmental systems.

Understand and appreciate the arts, literature, history and philosophical systems of major world cultures.

Understand human diversity with respect to race, ethnicity, gender and other issues related to improving human relations.

At HWC, assessment is understood to be an on-going responsibility. The college is always interested in improving the effectiveness of its course offerings, and the HWC Assessment Program is the main engine of that effort.

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The committee is investigating ways in which it can assist the departments in fully and effectively engaging their adjunct faculty in the assessment program. The committee is also considering the possibilities for assessment afforded by the new PeopleSoft® database that is scheduled to be on-line some time in the next year (2002). The committee is also considering the merits of trying to add an explicit "technology" component to the college's General Education Requirements.

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Since the implementation of the new assessment program at HWC, faculty involvement in the program has been greatly increased. During Spring 2001, nearly 40% of the college's full-time faculty were actively involved in the program, and almost 50% percent of the college's adjunct faculty were participating as well. The program covered 26 multi-section courses in which more than 600 students were enrolled. Eleven of thirteen departments have already made significant changes to their curricula and/or assessment instruments.

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