

HWC Assessment Committee

Departmental Assessment – Stages of Pilot

Stage One – Department Buy In and Outcome Definition

Full time and adjunct faculty members become familiar with this new process and agree the scale and scope of the initial assessment to be conducted within this pilot year. The scope could be a specific discipline, a series of courses or any other accumulation of courses which meet our two primary requirements. Firstly, the scale of student sample size must be large enough for us to be able to speak about Department students. Secondly, the scope of investigation is likely to provide usable learning for faculty and administration to make manageable changes to improve student learning.

The Department Liaison in consultation with the Department Assessment Coordinator, their own Department faculty, and Assessment Committee members formulate and approve specific departmental student learning outcomes. These student learning outcomes form the foundation of this new assessment work. These must remain fixed for a full cycle of the assessment process and then will be open for change as we continue assessment on specific outcomes in the light of our learning.

Stage Two – Assessment Research and Design

The Assessment Committee uses a sub-committee structure to maximize our expertise in researching and designing a specific methodology for each focused area of assessment investigation. This structure also applies to Departmental Assessment. In consultation with Department Assessment subcommittee members, a broad range of the host department faculty, and the Departmental Assessment Coordinator, Liaisons will find, create or review appropriate tools and processes for the specific learning outcomes and their particular departmental context.

Stage Three - Pilot Assessment Tools and Processes

Faculty volunteers and a small number of student sections pilot any assessment tool and process so that when the full assessment is used we have minimized potential errors and anticipated logistical and methodological challenges. The full Assessment Committee can also review metrics and processes and can be a very helpful during this pilot stage. Liaisons are encouraged to maximize the use of this additional expertise.

Stage Four – Administer Specific Assessment

A successful assessment requires buy-in and active contributions from many stakeholders. Liaisons should be conscious of achieving a significant sample size and one which mirrors the diversity and complexity of course sequences of the Departments' student body. Liaisons will recruit faculty and sections, ensure sample size, and conduct the testing process in formats that are accessible to all Department students. It is important to ensure specific actions are taken to include all students with disabilities.

Stage Five – Data Analysis

Assessment data is codified and organized; reliability and validity checks are undertaken and the Liaison should oversee the production of analyzed and useful data. This data analysis stage also includes a methodological review of our assessment process and assessment metrics. The administrative and data

processing functions are not expected to be conducted by Liaisons. Additional research resources will be provided by administration to ensure that this aspect of the assessment cycle is completed accurately and speedily.

Stage Six – Supporting Evidence-Based Change

The Departmental Coordinator and all Liaisons partner with other stakeholders, e.g. students and our sister colleges, to present findings and to recommend changes to improve student learning outcomes. A broad range of techniques will be used to disseminate findings and encourage dialogue and action to improve student learning. Findings, their dissemination and change recommendations, should be tracked to record actions that have resulted as a consequence of our new learning. We are really focused on recording the practical changes that are made as a result of our assessment findings. Evidence-based changes – in policy, curriculum, sequencing, pre-requisites, assignments, grading and teaching practices, or anything else that occurs, must be carefully recorded. Departmental Assessment is not an information gathering exercise. The final part of this stage also includes a review of the specific student learning outcomes under investigation and the continuation of the assessment process by returning to Step One. Departmental Assessment is a continuous reiterative loop of evidence of learning and change.

Mike Heathfield

August 15, 2012