

Assessment Committee Report (*presented to the faculty on November 16, 2010*)

Committee Members: Bob Williams (chair), Ruth Lanouette, Julie Haurykiewicz, Ron Peck, Gretchen Revie, Bill Skinner, Arnold Shoher (on sabbatical fall 2010)

Charge: Lead the faculty in establishing a system for ongoing assessment of the academic program, reporting of results, and provision of data to inform curricular change and institutional planning.

HLC requirements for Monitoring Report due October 1, 2012

Quote from Section V of the Assurance Section of the 2009 HLC Reaccreditation Report:

The Team recommends submission of a Monitoring Report demonstrating that a coordinated and robust structure for assessment is in operation, and that data from it is being used by appropriate constituencies in planning at multiple levels in the institution.

The report should include: learning goals and learning outcomes in place for all academic departments and programs; assessment programs in place and operating for the totality of the General Education Requirements as well as for the Senior Experience; data generated from the assessment process for each department and program including the General Education Requirements and the Senior Experience; coordination of all assessment activities; a connection between assessment findings, planning and curriculum.

The Monitoring Report should explain that an assessment program containing the elements identified in the previous paragraph is fully operational. If the assessment program is not fully operating, the Team recommends a Focused Visit should follow within a year.

Work completed last year (2009-10):

Departments/Programs

1. Defined learning outcomes for all majors and interdisciplinary areas.
 - 3 to 5 outcomes per department/program (up to 8 or 13 for some)
 - Curriculum maps and possible measures
2. Began implementation of Senior Experience (required for class of 2012).
3. Began first round of departmental assessment (pilot).
 - 4 assessment reports submitted: Anthropology, German, Spanish, Theater
4. Underwent DPI review of teacher certification programs.

General Education

5. Defined 22 learning outcomes for GERs
 - 2 general: 1 creative activity, 1 integrating knowledge
 - 9 distribution: 2 humanities, 3 fine arts, 2 social sciences, 2 natural sciences
 - 4 diversity: 2 global (choice of 1), 2 dimensions
 - 7 competency: 3 writing/speaking, 1 quantitative, 3 foreign language

Individualized Learning

6. Completed grant-supported research on tutorial learning outcomes and assessment.

Work in progress this year (2010-11):

Assessment Committee

1. Developing a sustainable structure for ongoing assessment of the academic program.
 - We will make recommendations to the Provost and Governance Committee regarding administrative and/or committee structure, process, staff, and resources.
2. Establishing a mechanism for storing assessment materials, reports, and work samples in a coded and searchable format.
 - We have been testing ResourceSpace software and other options for electronic storage.
3. Creating a matrix to track department/program learning outcomes, assessment methods, reports, findings, and subsequent actions.
 - We have created a matrix (a spreadsheet in the assessment share space) and are working with departments/programs to fill in the cells. The matrix should help us coordinate efforts, track progress, and report to the HLC. Departments should use the matrix to help state outcomes in a consistent format, as alignment is a critical factor of interest to the HLC.
4. Standardizing formats for department assessment reports and committee responses.
 - We have provided a department/program reporting template in the assessment share space and will standardize the format for assessment committee replies.
5. Drafting rubrics and recommending procedures for assessing GER competencies at key points in the academic program (such as Freshman Studies, foreign language 201s, G/D courses, W/S/Q courses, and Senior Experiences).
 - We have started drafting rubrics for writing/speaking and the two general outcomes (creative activity and integrating knowledge) and are considering where and how these outcomes could be assessed. Developing ways to assess other general education outcomes will require involvement from relevant departments as noted in #6 below.
6. Facilitating teams to develop assessment of distribution outcomes, diversity outcomes, language competencies, and the quantitative competency.
 - We will be organizing assessment development teams in winter 2011. These will include divisional teams for distribution outcomes, a team of faculty who teach language courses for language competencies, a team of faculty who teach G or D courses for diversity outcomes, and a team of faculty who teach Q courses for the quantitative competency. Each team will be charged with developing assessment tools and procedures for the relevant outcomes and recommending where and how they be implemented. The Assessment Committee will

provide guidance, support, and coordination of efforts to ensure a coordinated and consistent process for assessing general education outcomes.

7. Promoting ways to identify and document unique outcomes resulting from our emphasis on individualized learning and personal transformation.
 - We are seeking existing information sources (such as alumni surveys) that could identify personal outcomes of a Lawrence education, and we plan to include such examples in assessment reports to the HLC to emphasize the unique qualities of a Lawrence education.

Departments/Programs

1. Pilot the assessment of departmental learning outcomes, and file a report with the Assessment Committee by the end of the 2010-11 academic year.
 - We recommend focusing initially on the Senior Experience to assess program outcomes. Findings from a pilot round of assessment could be used to adjust statements of learning outcomes (for example, to improve measurability), to modify assessment methods or rubrics (to focus more squarely on outcomes or to better distinguish levels of performance), and/or to effect changes in the curriculum, with the goal of bringing these into alignment. It would then be advantageous to add an assessment point prior to the Senior Experience, such as in a core course or sequence, to provide data on development toward the outcomes. At a minimum, departments should plan to have a system for assessing the Senior Experience (or its equivalent) in place and operational for the June 2012 graduates.
2. Participate in a development team for assessment of general education outcomes (distribution, diversity, language, or quantitative).
 - We will set up development teams in winter 2011 and coordinate and facilitate their efforts to develop appropriate assessment tools and procedures and to recommend where and how they should be implemented (see #6 above).

Work planned for next year (2011-12):

Assessment Committee

1. Track department/program assessment progress and update the matrix of outcomes, reports, findings, and responses.
2. Read department/program assessment reports and write replies.
3. Oversee implementation of assessment for the general education requirements.
4. Implement an electronic system for storing assessment materials, reports, and samples.
5. Recommend a permanent structure for ongoing management of academic assessment and reporting of findings to decision makers and accrediting agencies.
6. Draft a monitoring report for the HLC (to be submitted by October 1, 2012).

Departments/Programs

1. Implement a system for assessing the Senior Experience (or more broadly assessing outcomes at completion of the major).
2. File an assessment report by July 1, 2012 (to be included in the HLC report).
3. Identify an assessment point prior to the Senior Experience and develop a mechanism for gathering data on progress toward department/program outcomes.
4. Participate in the assessment of general education outcomes as relevant to the department's role in the academic program.
5. Consider ways to document unique individual outcomes that could be reported to the administration and HLC and shared with Admissions and the Development Office.

Guiding principles for assessment:

1. *Focus on the mission and goals of Lawrence as an institution of liberal learning.*
2. *Evaluate programs, not students.* Assessing random samples or documenting patterns in graded coursework could provide sufficient information to guide curriculum planning without the need to assess every student's work individually.
3. *Inform decision-making, not conduct research.* Academic rigor and careful controls are essential to peer-reviewed research, but program assessment can rely on patterns and trends to guide decisions, reserving more careful probing to address specific concerns or guide modifications.
4. *Work in cycles and shift focus.* It is not necessary to assess every outcome every year. Assessment activities can target a particular outcome as needs warrant, so long as every outcome is assessed at a reasonable interval.
5. *Build on work already being done.* Grading in required courses (Freshman Studies, core courses, Senior Experiences), department/program reviews, and alumni surveys can all be good sources of assessment data. Gathering and reporting information from existing activities helps to make assessment manageable. In some cases, existing sources (such as surveys) can be modified to provide data that bears more directly on defined outcomes.
6. *Iterate and revise.* Each round of assessment provides an opportunity to revise outcome statements (to emphasize importance or increase clarity), assessment tools (to better target outcomes or distinguish levels of performance), and/or curriculum (to better accomplish desired outcomes). Indeed, this is the purpose of assessment! It is, however, essential to document the changes that result from each round of assessment so that these actions-based-on-assessment can be tracked and reported to the HLC.
7. *Make it useful.* Report and act on data in a way that most simply and directly supports your department's activities, the university's planning, and the HLC's reporting requirements.