

Planning of Core Outcomes Assessment in LDC and DE Programs

The College Core Outcomes are the broadest set of learning outcomes that we have, and are likely to be included in the Outcomes for each of the Transfer (AAOT, AS, ASOT-BUS) and General Studies (AGS) Degrees. For that reason, initial emphasis will be placed on the Core Outcomes.

To complete this Assessment Plan for 2010-2012, please address the questions below, either in this space, or using the "LDC Worksheet," or organizing the information in a manner that suits your SAC

Send to: learningassessment@pcc.edu **by November 15, 2010;** subject line: PLAN Assessment [SAC]

1. List the Core Outcomes that your SAC will assess:

2010-11: Communication and _____ *Self Reflection* _____

(also assess Critical Thinking if not completed in 2009-10)

2. Indicate generally how each of the Core Outcomes will be assessed. Please include information about the setting (in which course(s) or other setting) the students (all students or a sample) and the approach (i.e. assignment evaluated with a rubric, pre-post test, etc.).

The DE SAC will participate in Sonja Grove's Reading 115 information literacy project, which involves a student-designed rubric (to assess their own presentations) based on PCC's Core Outcomes, and a teacher-designed rubric to assess students' presentations and rubric. DE SAC members teaching RD 115 (not all faculty teaching 115 are participating, but all campuses are represented) have signed up to learn how Sonja's project went Fall term (2010), and to refine the project (based on Sonja's) for Winter term. For further information, please see Sonja Grove's description of her project (attached).

Annual Report for Assessment of Outcomes

Submitted June 2011

SAC: Developmental Education

Outcomes Assessed: Communication and Professional Competence

Note: When we submitted the DE SAC's Assessment Plan to the Learning Assessment Council in November, we wrote that the DE SAC planned to assess Communication and Self-Reflection. But after discussing the project in more depth during our SAC subcommittee meeting, we decided that assessing Communication and Professional Competence would work well with our chosen project and since our SAC was headed toward a heavily self-reflective year, our Program Review year.

I. Describe changes that have been implemented towards improving students' attainment of outcomes that resulted from outcome assessments carried out in the previous academic year.

While our SAC didn't make any *program*-level changes as a result of last year's work, individual teachers found that the experience impacted their teaching, as Monica Cristofili, one of last year's participants, notes: "Honestly, the rubric did a LOT for how I teach. I actually use it as the final assignment in my Writing 90 class now, with a couple tweaks to it, letting my students know that it will indeed be the final project and that all their summary and summary/response and reflection work throughout the term is building to this special kind of summary/response, the synopsis/critique of the book review. The rubric gave me a teaching target so that the process my students were going through as reading writers became more than a set of motions to get an assignment done but a journey of sorts to this *chance* to contextualize and then comment on this novel we worked with together all term."

As a SAC we are just beginning to realize that the assessments are supposed to help guide our program and help us make needed changes. We are now encouraging all SAC members to become conversant in assessment.

This year, like our first year, resulted in a small group of DE teachers working on Core Outcomes Assessment for *one class* (Reading 115) in our course sequence (RD/WR 80/90 & RD 115). It wasn't a SAC-wide, program-level project. It was much like last year's Critical Thinking project in its scope and in its focus on one project in one course, Reading 115. While the teachers involved in both groups gained valuable insights from the process and from each other, the SAC as a whole hasn't yet developed a SAC-wide project. But next year, we'll all focus on Self-Reflection for Program Review, and we've already begun to examine this in a much larger way. We are encouraging all SAC members to add Self-Reflection at the beginning of the quarter and at the end (minimum), and we are trying to get SAC members involved starting in the fall.

This year we still had some confusion about program-level assessment: *does assessing one class relate to program-level assessment?*

A central question that the Learning Assessment Council asks SACs to address is “What did we find out at the end of this project which would change our program?”

This year, our work on Core Outcomes assessment was both illuminating and confusing. We realized that we were not really doing PROGRAM assessment since our SAC subcommittee was so small. But the process of thinking through this project, discussing language and designing a rubric, helped illuminate many areas of confusion about how to make PCC Core Outcomes assessment relevant to our teaching and to our program.

As a result of this year’s project, the DE SAC has five more SAC members (in addition to last year’s group) who have grappled with how to make the PCC Core Outcomes relevant to our discussion of DE teaching and program assessment. We also have a participant, Cecelia Guinee, who has become more involved in Learning Assessment, and Lisa Rosenthal, of course, who headed last year’s project, continues to be a resource to us. The more people who actively participate in this Learning Assessment process and can share their knowledge and answer our questions, the more quickly our SAC will get up to speed in *program* assessment.

Considering some of the confusion our subcommittee experienced (Uh-oh, are we just assessing *one class’s* learning? Are we assessing *students’* understanding? Or our *teaching*? How does this relate to *program* assessment if at all?), we were reminded that (1) we, like our students, require small steps, scaffolded instruction, in order to learn something new (like program assessment of Core Outcomes), and (2) we, like our students, learn best when we have to think through a new concept on our own and apply it in a meaningful way. So this project was a valuable learning experience.

We’re gradually learning how to assess at a program level by NOT quite doing it right the first or second time. It’s taking a while: slowly, more and more DE SAC members are understanding, through trial and error, what is being asked of us.

Having said that, this year’s project was GREAT, and we were very fortunate that a master teacher, Sonja Grove, who teaches part time at Cascade, shared her hard work with the SAC and allowed us to participate in—and adapt--her project.

2. Identify the outcomes assessed this year, and describe the methods used.

What were the results of the assessment (i.e., what did you learn about how well students are meeting the outcomes)?

Include relevant information about:

- The students (how many, where in your program (one class, a group of classes, end of degree?))

- The nature of the assessment (written work, project, exam, performance task, observation etc).
- How was the assessment evaluated?

Background for this year's project

Sonja Grove, an instructor at Cascade, teaches Reading 115 (College Reading) and has used PCC's Core Outcomes (the whole list) as part of her class discussion. In her words, "College Reading is an exciting course that allows students and staff multiple opportunities for learning and student choice. The [Reading 115 course] outcomes are important for life far beyond PCC and align perfectly with PCC's Core Outcomes." At first she decided to share the outcomes with her students because she felt they should, as readers in college, grapple with the language that PCC has chosen to use to describe the key concepts its students are meant to learn at PCC (several of which are also emphasized in Reading 115's CCOGs, such as Communication and Critical Thinking).

But she soon realized in discussing the language with her students that the outcomes, to be fully understood, needed to be broken down and defined with greater specificity. She also recognized how similar many of the outcomes were to both the Course Outcomes for Reading 115 and the outcomes for her Reading 115 Information Literacy project, a formal presentation of student research. She began developing a rubric to use (with core outcomes language) to help make explicit the expectations for her students' Information Literacy presentation.

That is where the DE SAC came in. Sonja had intended to submit her rubric to the Learning Assessment Council on her own, but the SAC was interested in participating for several reasons:

- Sonja's project had an exciting scope: she uses the core outcomes as *text* in the classroom, as an *assessment* tool for both students and teachers, and focuses on assessing student learning in a key part of the course, the Information Literacy project
- We liked the focus on our Information Literacy project, which is still in development since being added to our RD 115 course
- We liked the opportunity to make the PCC Core Outcomes more relevant to students and to our teaching
- We welcomed the chance to work together to define more specifically the learning outcomes surrounding Communication at the 115 level (and for this project in particular)

Participants

In the fall of 2010, the DE SAC subcommittee had 6 participants, both full time and part time, from three campuses. By the time the project took place in the spring of 2011, just three teachers, full time and part time from two campuses (Cascade and Sylvania) were teaching

Reading 115. Two other original committee members stayed with the committee to participate in the discussion even though they weren't teaching the course that term.

Participants: Sonja Grove, Cecelia Guinee, Susan Larson

Other Committee members: Beth Kaufka and Heather Cole

Number of classes/students

Five sections of Reading 115 were involved in this project. Forty-nine group presentations (114 students total) were scored with the same rubric.

The rubric

The Information Literacy project, while varying from teacher to teacher, has as its basic structure the following steps: Students identify an information need and create an inquiry question; form groups to work in a team to gather information from various sources to answer the question; and then critically read and reflect on what they read in groups and individually. The project asks students to write a metacognitive, written reflection on their learning, their research process, and their experience as part of a group. Sonja (and other teachers) also requires a final presentation, created by the group using PowerPoint, to share their learning with the rest of the class. These presentations are at the end of the term.

Our SAC subcommittee met to **create a rubric** (attached) to give to student groups relatively early in the Information Literacy project. The rubric broke down the Core Outcomes of Communication and Professional Competence into separate skills, **clarifying for students the expectations for their end-of-term presentation**. The groups were given the same rubric that their instructors would use to score their final group presentations.

As a committee, we met several times to write the rubric and then met at the end of Spring term to discuss how useful the rubric was for the students and teachers in guiding and assessing learning outcomes for the Information Literacy presentations.

While working together, of course, we had many useful conversations about Reading 115, about how we teach the Information Literacy project (some of us had always required presentations, some had not), and how students responded to various aspects of the project, such as working in teams, dividing the work equitably, etc.

We agreed that designing a rubric like this can give students clear language around our expectations; it gives students a clear target to hit. In each class, students were given the rubric prior to the actual presentation, and each instructor intentionally reviewed the rubric and categories, but some devoted more in-class time to discussion than others. For example, Sonja Grove had individual students take responsibility for an individual part of the rubric in order to

help the group make sure it was addressing each outcome. The other instructors felt this would have helped their students make active use of the rubric during group work.

b. Results: What did you learn?

All three teachers were impressed with the groups' presentations and felt that the students adequately met (or exceeded) their expectations. Sonja Grove, who has worked with this project in her classes for several terms now, noted, "I think these were the best presentations I have observed in RD 115. I believe the outcomes were evident in the presentations beyond any other terms." She spent more time in discussion of the rubric and outcomes with her students, and she also spent time teaching "the characteristics/behaviors of high functioning teams."

There was some skepticism from the other two instructors about how effective the rubric was (whether students' performances would have been high with or without the rubric ahead of time). Only Sonja felt she spent sufficient time training groups in effective group work. The other two felt they didn't spend (or have) enough time to make use of the rubric as a teaching tool. They were also not certain that the time spent on presentations (versus just group work and a written project) was worth it: students enjoyed the process and the opportunity, they said, but they felt they had to cut out other valuable instruction to leave enough time for group work and presentations.

We did not record the group presentations, so the only evidence we looked at as a subcommittee were the teacher-scored rubrics of the group presentations. One instructor scored groups, but then went back through her notes to give individual students their own rubric and grade because she felt uncomfortable basing a large part of a student's grade on group-based work. The other two instructors graded groups as a whole.

We were able to gather a small data set from our rubric to show us specifically in which areas students achieved and which outcomes were ranked higher. We averaged the scores for each individual rubric category for two sample courses with 12 different groups. Note: Our rubric is divided into three performance categories: below expectation (points 0-1), adequate (points 2-3), and exceptional. Please refer to the rubric for criteria for each category.

PCC Core Outcomes used in the rubric:

- Communication
- Professional competence
- Critical Thinking as it pertains to research

Highest scoring categories to lowest scoring categories...

1. Communication 1, audience awareness = 4/5 (exceptional)
2. Critical thinking 6, thoroughly-integrated knowledge of subject = 3.83/5 (adequate)

3. Critical thinking 7, organized structure = 3.75/5 (adequate)
4. Communication 2, appropriate and creative use of media = 3.66/5 (adequate)
5. Professional competence 5, professional attitude, appearance, etc = 3.58/5 (adequate)
6. Professional competence 4, collaboration = 3.36/5 (adequate)
7. Communication 3, English language conventions = 3/5 (adequate)

As the data reveals, the students placed into the “adequate” category in all areas except audience awareness; in the area of audience awareness, under the core outcome category of communication, they ranked in the “exceptional” category. This brief analysis bides well for the assessment overall but also tells us that in the core outcomes area we are specifically assessing – professional competence – we did not achieve in the ways we had hoped or expected. This raises questions about what we are focusing on for our assessment of professional competency; should we have focused on professional competence in terms of general academic behaviors for student success such as attendance, timely submission of coursework, and so on, rather than professional competence in a presentation project? We also noted that although our students scored high in one of our focus areas (communication via audience awareness), the lowest scoring categories are comprised of our two core outcome foci. There is a full point differential between our highest scored category and our lowest, English language conventions. That our students scored the lowest in English language conventions in a *reading* class raises questions about what we should be focusing on in RD 115 and in reading classes in general, as opposed to writing. Obviously, English language conventions are a focus in our DE *writing* courses. Such questions will help guide our discussion in our larger DE SAC meetings for our upcoming program review.

3. Identify any changes that should, as a result of this assessment, be implemented towards improving students’ attainment of outcomes.

As the Learning Assessment Council noted from their document “2010 Observations and Recommendations,” “[m]any of the recommendations for change that were voiced had more to do with changing the process of assessing student learning than changing the program or method of teaching.” Our changes are likely a mix of those. We’re still trying to discern the difference between the two.

Possible change: English language conventions

As mentioned above, the project uncovered an important question to bring to the DE SAC as a whole: how much time should we devote in a *Reading* class to English language conventions? What standard do we hold students to in a reading (as opposed to a writing) class? A “change that should result” might include more instruction on English language conventions in reading classes. Another SAC discussion (and change) might be increased integration of reading/writing instruction.

Possible change: defining Professional Competence for DE

Years ago, SACs were asked to rate their courses according to how they addressed the PCC Outcomes, and the DE SAC at the time struggled to find the relevance of “Professional Competence” to our DE courses. We assumed that particular outcome related more to professional/technical programs and upper level courses at PCC. When this group met and selected Professional Competence as one of the foci for our project, we realized that in the context of a formal presentation, professional competence *did* apply; we defined that outcome in our rubric. We can bring this to the SAC’s attention to discuss further.

Possible change: starting earlier

As a SAC we will not wait until Spring quarter to try our next assessment; we will strongly encourage every instructor to use a common assignment to assess Self-Reflection. We are already gathering self reflection assignments and program activities and posting them to our group page now.

Other changes/notes that came up for us:

- Make the rubric’s *order* reflect higher-to-lower-order learning priorities
- Have students brainstorm *before* receiving a rubric: what is good “communication”? (or any other Core Outcome)
- SAC should define/describe what each Core Outcome looks like in a DE class, at our different levels *before* working on new projects
- And then decide--are these skills we should teach? How? Where? (In which course(s)?)
If not, can we expect students to already have these skills coming in?

Written by Heather Cole, with contributions from Sonja Grove, Cecelia Guinee, Susan Larson and Beth Kaufka

INFORMATION LIT PRESENTATION SCORING SHEET

Student
/ Group:

Date:

COMMUNICATION

Presentation demonstrates:

1. Awareness of audience through approach that increases understanding of all audience members

Below Expectations (0-1pt)	Adequate (2-3 pts)	Exceptional (4-5 pts)	Notes
Vocabulary not clarified	Most vocabulary clarified	All vocabulary terms clear and appropriate	_____ points
Lacking sufficient background information	Some background information provided	Background information is provided clearly	
Audience has gaps in understanding	Audience understands most of the presentation	Audience fully enjoys and understands presentation	

2. Appropriate and creative use of media

Below Expectations (0-1pt)	Adequate (2-3 pts)	Exceptional (4-5 pts)	Notes
Media not used effectively to convey information	Media used appropriately to convey information	Media is well-chosen and skillfully used to create a memorable and creative presentation.	_____ points
Errors in the media presented	No obvious errors in media	Media has no obvious errors	
Lack of audience engagement	Audience engagement was evident.	Audience is highly engaged.	

3. Correct usage of English language conventions

Below Expectations (0-1 pts.)	Adequate (2-3 pts.)	Exceptional (4-5 pts.)	Notes
Distracting errors in Grammar and mechanics: Punctuation Sentences Vocabulary use Spelling Capitalization	No errors in grammar and mechanics: Punctuation Sentences Vocabulary use Spelling Capitalization	Correct and sophisticated English grammar and mechanics: Punctuation Sentences Vocabulary use Spelling Capitalization	_____ points

PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

Presentation demonstrates:

4. Collaboration and shared responsibility for project; each member of the group has a significant and equal role in the effective delivery of information

Below Expectations (0-1pt)	Adequate (2-3 pts)	Exceptional (4-5 pts)	Notes
<p>Lack of an effective plan for group work.</p> <p>Some members of the group are clearly not prepared or doing more of the work than others</p>	<p>Plan provides for equal participation of all group members in the preparation and presentation of the project.</p> <p>Some group members are more thoroughly prepared than others.</p>	<p>A carefully constructed written plan that ensures each member of the group has a significant and equal role in the project and is able to work at top effectiveness.</p> <p>Each student is thoroughly prepared and clearly explains the information s/he is responsible for presenting.</p>	<p>_____ points</p>

5. Professional attitude, personal appearance and communication skills that are appropriate in the academic setting

Below Expectations(0-1 pt)	Adequate (2-3 pts)	Exceptional (4-5 pts)	Notes
<p>Personal appearance and attire that detracts from presentation or shows lack of respect for audience members.</p> <p>Ill-prepared or highly improvised delivery. Lacks evidence of practice or attention to audience needs and interests.</p> <p>Presentation malfunctions.</p>	<p>Attention to personal appearance and attire that does not interfere with presentation.</p> <p>Rehearsed and well-organized delivery and communication style.</p> <p>Presentation worked smoothly.</p>	<p>Careful grooming and confident personal appearance that inspires audience with appearance of professionalism, mastery of content, and advance preparation.</p> <p>Highly-rehearsed and polished delivery and communication style.</p> <p>Complete mastery and smooth flow of all presentation components.</p>	<p>_____ points</p>

CRITICAL THINKING as it PERTAINS TO RESEARCH

Presentation demonstrates:

6. Thoroughly-integrated knowledge of subject

Below Expectations (0-1pt)	Adequate (2-3 pts)	Exceptional (4-5 pts)	Notes
Minimal research evident	Well-researched inquiry question	Very clear and well-researched inquiry question	_____ points
Main points unclear	Main points presented	Main points supported well.	
Lacking strong support, reasons, examples, details and facts.	Good use of reasons, examples, details and facts.	Excellent use of strong reasons, examples, specific details and facts.	

7. Clear and organized structure

Below Expectations (0-1pt)	Adequate (2-3 pts)	Exceptional (4-5 pts)	Notes
Confusing or disorganized introduction, body, and/or conclusion;	Clear introduction, body, and conclusion;	Extremely clear introduction, body, and conclusion;	_____ points
Random movement from point to point and section to section.	Coherent movement from point to point and section to section.	Sophisticated logical movement from point to point and section to section.	

Comments:

_____ Total Points