Departmental Outcomes Assessment

1 QI — QUALITY INITIATIVE

It is described as: “NMSU has identified a multi-year Quality Initiative (QI) project that focuses on writing within the discipline, and that NMSU Provost Dan Howard describes as being ‘designed to help students learn, to help students communicate effectively, and to produce students who have essential skills valued by employers, graduate schools and professional schools.’ NMSU will complete this project as part of our institutional accreditation under the Open Pathway of the Higher Learning Commission” (http://assessment.nmsu.edu/quality-initiatives/). Basically, the university is asking departments to assess students’ writing within each discipline. Each department can run their assessment on other areas as well but must include a writing assessment.

2 WEAVE — HTTP://ASSESSMENT.NMSU.EDU/WEAVE/

The program we use for assessment is called “WEAVE” and training on the WEAVE program can be found at: https://trainingcentral.nmsu.edu

3 YEARLY DEADLINES FOR ASSESSMENT

- FALL, 2016 – by September 1, 2016 you should have completed ALL sections of WEAVE for the previous year (this year that will be 2015-2016) and your evaluation is submitted for evaluation by Associate Dean Hubbell who will give feedback for your final submission in early October.
  - Begin the next year’s (2016-2017) assessment in September, 2016 – as you finish the previous academic year’s assessment and work through WEAVE you end up making a plan that will go into the following year.
- SPRING, 2017 – Collect data on assessment (2016-2017), analyze data, enter findings
  - VERY IMPORTANT: If you have a committee or 9 month faculty member running your assessment be sure data/findings are entered before they leave for summer!!!!!
  - If turned in on designated date, feedback from Associate Dean Hubbell will be returned to department before the end of the Spring semester.
- SUMMER –
  - DH responsible for: Completing the Achievement Summary and Analysis section, addressing feedback and suggestions, and preparing for discussion with faculty in August of Achievement Summary/Analysis and final sections (Analysis/Reporting, Action Plan, and Achievement Summary).
4 Some Thoughts/Suggestions on Efficiently and Effectively Finishing Your Assessment

- Have a committee of faculty work on the project with the Department Head taking an active role, but not as leader of the group. Dept. Heads have a lot to do and faculty are more engaged in the process when they are running it. But, Department Heads should be able to work on WEAVE in summer even when faculty are not there. Department Heads should know what is happening with assessment but they do not have to carry the entire process for the department.
- Follow the due dates closely and finish everything including entering the findings before the end of Spring semester
- Look at what other departments enter for their assessment. You can access other departments’ assessments and they can help you decide how to write yours
- Look at what is being assessed in your discipline. You may be able to obtain measures, for example, that can help you in your assessment.
- Ask for help! You can get help through the WEAVE site, from other department heads, and from Associate Dean Hubbell. Ask for help when you need it!
Quality Initiative

Apply for a Writing to Learn Mini-Grant – Deadline is June 13

Questions on the Quality Initiative or the Writing to Learn Mini-grant application? Contact Shelly Stovall at sstovall@nmsu.edu or at 646-5095.

Current research indicates that external stakeholders, particularly employers, identify written and oral communication as critical skills necessary for success in professional settings. Results from a 2004 survey of 120 major American corporations that employ nearly 8 million people overwhelmingly indicate that writing is a “threshold skill” for hiring and promotion among salaried employees (United States: The National Commission on Writing for America’s Families, Schools, and Colleges. Writing: A Ticket to Work... Or A Ticket Out, A Survey of Business Leaders. College Board, 2004). Effective Communication is one piece of NMSU’s Vision for the Baccalaureate Experience.

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institutional accreditation under the Open Pathway of the Higher Learning Commission.

A major focus of our QI is Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), Writing in the Disciplines (WID) and Writing-to-Learn. The research is clear that writing aids critical thinking skills, and that writing is a unique mode for learning. A statement posted on the Wisconsin Center for Educational Research website about the use of writing as an effective method to teach content reads, “To learn we must place new knowledge into a cognitive framework. Writing provides the process needed to relate new knowledge to prior experience (synthesis). It also provides a means by which knowledge is symbolically transformed via language into icons. Finally, the written material, the product of this process, is concrete and visible and permits review, manipulation, and modification of knowledge as it is “learned” and put into a framework.” (http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/archive/cl1/cl/doingcl/writing.htm).

Article: NMSU works to examine, improve student writing in disciplines

NMSU’s proposed Open Pathways Quality Initiative project “Expert Insider Prose: Developing Students’ Disciplinary Expertise in Writing,” was submitted to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association Fall 2013 and was approved by the HLC on February 24, 2014.

Contact Us
Office of Assessment
185-B Milton Hall/MSC 311Q
575-646-7621

Mission:
Promoting, facilitating and communicating a positive culture and unrelenting institutional commitment to intentional and systematic improvement in institutional effectiveness and teaching and learning.

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WEAVE

The Office of Assessment is pleased to announce the implementation of WEAVEonline, a cloud-based outcomes assessment (OA) reporting software package to facilitate and streamline NMSU's annual OA reporting processes. After carefully considering several software applications, an NMSU task force identified WEAVE as the best solution for NMSU's assessment reporting needs. WEAVE software was purchased Spring 2014, piloted by academic and co-curricular departments Summer 2014, and went live for the Las Cruces campus on September 17, 2014. Beginning Fall 2015, all outcomes assessment reporting will be through WEAVE.

WEAVE Implementation & Reporting Schedule

For additional information on assessment terminology and expectations, see the following documents:

- Glossary of NMSU Assessment Terminology as used in WEAVE
- Fall 2015 ADA Feedback Rubric

For more information about Fall 2015 reporting for academic units, see:

- Academic Departmental Assessment
- Log in to NMSU WEAVEonline Homepage
Click here to Request User Access

Access to WEAVEonline reporting software is available by request through the Office of Assessment. Administrators with titles of Department Head/Director or above will be granted access based on request. Faculty and/or staff will be granted access based on request and confirmation by their respective Department Head/Director. Users must be approved for user access prior to attendance at training sessions. We will respond to your request within 2 business days, and will set up your account as quickly as possible after approval has been granted.

Questions about WEAVE? Contact Us

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1. **Presentation by David Smith**  
   **NMSU and Assessment**  
   **National Survey on Assessment Attitudes**  
   Fill in the blank: ________ is the primary reason assessment is conducted at my institution.  
   A. Accreditation  
   B. Improving student learning  
   C. Accountability  
   D. Compliance with government mandates  
   E. Other

2. **Accreditation: HLC Criteria**  
   "The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement."  
   - Purpose: Clearly-stated goals for student learning.  
   - Effectiveness: Assess achievement of learning outcomes.  
   - Improvement: Use assessment information to improve student learning ("closing the loop")  
   - Process: Substantial participation of faculty...  
   *Next: Taking the focus off of accreditation!*

3. **Demonstrating the quality of your educational programs... where to start?**  
   - Centered around student learning and learning outcomes. What should a graduate of your program know, value, and be able to do, etc.? "Outcomes express these things in terms that can be measured!"  
   - What should be measured? (Based on importance, need, or a schedule.) How will it be measured? What do you expect to find? What did you find? Who should you tell? What does it mean?  
   - How will you use your findings (results of an assessment) to improve student learning? (Compliance with reporting should not the primary objective of assessment!)

   *Summary: Assessment = healthy, faculty-led self assessment of educational programs*

4. **Complementary yet Competing Priorities**  
   **Effectiveness**  
   - Show we are doing well!  
   - Meeting targets (KPIs, etc.) is encouraged and rewarded.  
   - Demonstrate a process for evaluating effectiveness.
Primary role of program review and external program accreditation.

HLC Perspective: An effective program is always characterized by a commitment to improvement.

5. Current Challenges
   - Closing the loop. Reaccreditation is threatened if we cannot demonstrate widespread efforts of assessment toward improvement. This will be my number one priority in providing feedback on departmental assessment reports.
   - Articulating and aligning course, program, and institutional learning outcomes.

6. Classroom Embedded Program Assessment?
   Yes, using well-designed assignments!
   - alignment with program and institutional outcomes makes them useful for assessment
   - faculty participation is natural not forced
   - students are motivated to complete “assessments”
   - communicate to students what is important to faculty.

7. Classroom Embedded Program Assessment?
   - Watch for a spring workshop on assignment design for assessment.
   - National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) “Charrette” opportunity to design “signature assignments” for your program. Posted in their assignment library. Contact me immediately if interested.

8. Assessment Reporting
   Benefits of WEAVE
   - Repository of assessment information
     - analysis and reporting for accreditation.
     - determination of alignment with institutional objectives (“associations”)
     - “action plan” support for closing the loop
     - potential arena for training in assessment
   - Sharing of processes and data, internally, and in support of transparency

   I want to solicit your input on how to make WEAVE work better for you.... after today’s workshop.

9. Quality Initiative (QI) and Assessment
   - Initiative for institutional improvement in support of our upcoming reaffirmation of
• Last year’s assessment emphasis on writing is just one part of the initiative. *It was a one-time mandate of assessment content.*
• Work toward closing the loop on the QI assessment is encouraged. However,
• There is no mandated assessment topic from the office of assessment for the 2015 – 2016 assessment cycle.

10 □ Summary

  Demonstrating a quality improvement process takes priority over quality assurance.
  • Focused on students and their learning
  • Self-reflective and self-critical departmental process
  • Assessment’s value is determined by how data are used
  •
1. **WEAVE SECTIONS**
   Assessment ≠ WEAVE
   Michèle Shuster
   - Assessment is assessment
     - Student learning
     - WEAVE is the reporting tool
   - Assessment is interesting
     - WEAVE is _____
   - Try to focus on assessment
     - Don’t sweat WEAVE
     - Tolerate it/accept it

2. **Assessment Reporting**
   - We are asked to report on “stuff”
     - What are our student learning goals?
     - What are our student learning objectives?
     - How are we going to know how well students are doing?
     - How well did they do?
     - What are we going to do about it?

3. **Similar to Scholarship**
   (we all know how to do this)
   - Thinking of assessment like our scholarship

4. **Goals = Overarching Questions**
   - Ultimately, what do you want to know?
   - For our students
     - Big picture about student learning
     - Probably similar b/w departments
   - Knowledge of the Discipline
   - Critical Thinking
     - Presumably these are important for all of us

5. **Objectives**
   - Breaking it down/ getting more specific
     - The smaller/narrower/distinct question we are asking
   - Knowledge for career
     - Students will know enough to enter chose profession or begin post-baccalaureate studies

6. **Goals and Objectives**
   1. Knowledge of the discipline
      - Students will have some
2 • Knowledge for career
   – Students will know enough to enter chose profession or begin post-baccalaureate studies

7 □ Goals and Objectives
1 • Scientific (or disciplinary) Inquiry and Communication
   – Engage students in critical scientific inquiry and provide opportunities to communicate scientific information clearly in preparation for employment &/or continuing advanced education in the life sciences
2 • Biological problem solving
   – Students will be able to use appropriate approaches to evaluate biological problems and hypotheses in the context of biological facts and principles and in the context of relevant interdisciplinary concepts

8 □ Goals and Objectives
1 • Scientific (or disciplinary) Inquiry and Communication
   – Engage students in critical scientific inquiry and provide opportunities to communicate scientific information clearly in preparation for employment &/or continuing advanced education in the life sciences
2 • Effective communication
   – Students will be able to communicate effectively in a variety of modalities (e.g. discussions, oral presentations, scientific writing) and will be able to address questions and comments about their work in a meaningful way

9 □ Outcomes
   • What specific question are you asking
     – About student learning

10 □ Questions & Outcomes
1 • Question:
   – To what extent can students communicate their scientific results (in writing) to both a scientific and general audience

2 • Phrased in Outcomes language:
   – Students will be able to communicate their scientific results effectively (in writing) to both a scientific and general audience

11 □ Measures
    (Materials & Methods)
   • How am I going to answer my question?
   • What am I going to look at?
   • What evidence/data am I going to collect and analyze?
   • "Measure" = student data
     – E.g. capstone writing project
12 **Measures**  
*(Materials and Methods)*  
- Measures are the data source  
  - Need a plan to score/analyze  
  - E.g. use a rubric  
  - Score each student's work based on the rubric

13 **Target**  
- Not a clear parallel with my scholarship  
  - Sort of like predicted results  
  - If my hypothesis was elegantly and perfectly supported  
- Aspirational goals  
  - In the ideal world/setting the bar high  
  - How would students do?

14 **Target**  
- This is why our question is framed as  
  - To what extent can our students do xyz  
  - vs just Can our students do xyz  
- Two options  
  - A. put a lofty number (target) on it  
  - B. admit you have never assessed this before, so have no idea what to expect. Set a baseline first, then set increasingly lofty targets thereafter.

15 **Findings = Results**  
- What did you find out about how your students did on the "measure" (data/evidence/work) that you scored?  
- Describe your results  
- Note that you don't have to do a full-on scientific/statistical analysis that would be worthy of publication- and unless you have an IRB for this, you aren't going to be able to publish it anyway.

16 **Findings**  
- Once you have described your results (findings) take a moment to relate them to your targets  
- Did you meet your targets? If so, how are you going to move your targets next round?  
- If not, you probably have ideas about where changes can be made to the teaching and learning process  
- Save these thoughts for the Achievement/Summary/Analysis Section!

17 **Action Plan Tracking**  
- Your plan
• Your timeline
• Next steps

18 [ ] Achievement Summary/Analysis
• Discussion and Implications
• Probably better to look at questions asked first, then answer them
• This section is for discussing, reflecting, and considering implications
  – e.g. for teaching and learning in your department
  – Assessment is a departmental level process
  – Should inform departmental teaching and learning
•
Example of Assessment –
Keep it Simple
Assessment
Julie Fitzsimmons

Art 298 “Writing in Art History” Assessment
- Art 298 – new course recently developed.
- How to measure effectiveness of course?
- Initial “undirected” short 20 minute writing assignment administered first day of class
- Same assignment administered last week of course and still “undirected”
- Summative (value added) assessment

Botticelli Birth of Venus c.1482 Tempera on canvas 5’8”x 9’1”

RUBRIC – Outcomes Measured
- Describes content using art specific vocabulary – Visual Analysis and Form
- Demonstrates critical thinking by analyzing meaning – Content
- Constructs a coherent essay – thesis and supportive arguments that demonstrates logical thinking and process
- Identifies artist, period or style – the image is a well known art work

RESULTS
- 11 student samples were collected
- Possible score 10
- Average score initial writing – 4.818
- Average score second writing – 6.727

NB These are low stakes (no grade) assignments

FOLLOW UP
- Two sections of Art 298 currently (Fall 2015) being assessed with same instrument to confirm effectiveness rating of Spring 2015 assessment
- Lower scores would indicate a move to formative assessment

Simple assessment tools like this readily adaptable to most disciplines
Summative assessment seems to be a quick method to identify weaknesses