

Assessment Plan for College-Wide Learning Outcomes—Adopted February 8, 2011

Program Assessment—Each program is responsible to assess discipline-specific knowledge, skills and abilities at least every other academic year. In addition, each program is responsible for assessing college-wide learning outcomes two through five (where applicable to the program outcomes) at least once every four years. Programs are required to do so during the scheduled targeted assessment (see below).

General Studies/General Education Assessment—The ePortfolio Director conducts an annual review of a sample of ePortfolios from graduating General Studies majors. The review will document the extent of evidence students use to address CWLOs #2-5.

Institution-Level: Targeted Assessment Studies—Following a cyclical schedule that allows programs to implement instructional changes in light of assessment results, the ePortfolio Director uses *the same data gathered during program and General Studies/General Education assessments described above* to create a detailed study pertaining to the targeted learning outcome. The schedule:

- **#2: Effective Communication**
 - **Spring Term 2012—Gather Data**
 - **May 2012—Programs Analyze Data using Rubrics**
 - **Summer 2012—ePortfolio Director Writes Overall Assessment Report**
 - **Fall 2012—Begin to Implement Changes**
 - **Follow-up Data Gathering and Analysis in Spring 2016**
- **#3: Quantitative Literacy**
 - **Spring Term 2013—Gather Data**
 - **May 2013—Programs Analyze Data using Rubrics**
 - **Summer 2013—ePortfolio Director Writes Overall Assessment Report**
 - **Fall 2013—Begin to Implement Changes**
 - **Follow-up Data Gathering and Analysis in Spring 2017**
- **#4: Critical Thinking**
 - **Spring 2014—Gather Data**
 - **Summer 2014— Programs Analyze Data using Rubrics**
 - **Summer 2014—ePortfolio Director Writes Overall Assessment Report**
 - **Fall 2014—Begin to Implement Changes**
 - **Follow-up Data Gathering and Analysis in Spring 2018**
- **#5: Civic Engagement and/or Working Professionally and Constructively with Others**
 - **Spring 2015—Gather Data**
 - **Summer 2015— Programs Analyze Data using Rubrics**
 - **Summer 2015—ePortfolio Director Writes Overall Assessment Report**
 - **Fall 2015—Begin to Implement Changes**
 - **Follow-up Data Gathering and Analysis in Spring 2019**

Visualizing Assessment of College-wide Learning Outcomes at SLCC

Institution-Level Assessment

CWLO: 4-year cycle targeted assessment of one outcome per year: effective communication, quantitative literacy, critical thinking, and civic engagement/working professionally with others.

Program Assessment

Program Assessment of the following:

1. Program outcomes assessed by chair and faculty.
2. Annual assessment of a program outcome that speaks directly to the CWLO being targeted by **Institution-level Assessment** in a given year.

Informs improvements of faculty pedagogy, program curriculum, and departmental professional development.

Direct assessment of student work, which may/may not take the form of work submitted in ePortfolios.

Gen Ed Assessment

General Education Assessment annually of CWLO (#2-5).

Sample consists of ePortfolios of graduating General Studies majors.

Holistic ePortfolio rubric used to assess the evidence in student ePortfolios.

Informs Gen Ed Committee, FTLC and departmental professional development.

Conducted by Dean of Gen and Dev Ed with paid faculty reviewers.

Signature assignments

Institution-level Assessment Report combines the following:

- Results of **Program** and **Gen Ed Assessment**.
- Graduating Student Survey data.
- CCSSE data.

Informs QHEC initiatives, Executive Cabinet, FTLC and departmental professional development, and Innovation Grant RFP.

Example: Spring 2012

From the Chair and faculty's perspective:

- Because of the pre-established schedule, the Chair and faculty know that Effective Communication is the targeted CWLO for this year. [The department will likely have other program-specific learning outcomes it wants assessed as well.]
- Assessment Design: The Chair and faculty design assessment(s) that target student performance on Effective Communication that is/are relevant to the program's own learning outcomes. This assessment must involve direct assessment of student work using a rubric that meets basic standards set by the Quality Higher Education Council.
- Assessment Implementation:
 - The department gathers student assignments during the late Spring of 2012 or Fall of 2011. The assignments might be signature assignments that students have posted in their ePortfolios, or the department may decide that some other method of accessing student assignments works better.
 - In Spring 2012, the Chair organizes a small group of faculty to apply the rubric to student work, and then the Chair reports the results to the Office of Outcomes Assessment. Such reporting should be complete by the end of May.

From the Dean's perspective:

- Deans need to see that Departments complete their targeted assessment projects and report their data.

From the ePortfolio Director's perspective:

- Will work with the Outcomes Assessment Coordinator to gather the assessment data pertaining to Effective Communication reported by each Department.
- Each summer the Director will collect the results of Program and Gen Ed Assessment and write an Institution-level Assessment Report identifying strengths and weaknesses with respect to the elements of Effective Communication assessed by programs, to the extent of evidence captured by the annual review of ePortfolio signature assignments in the Gen Ed assessment, and to other indirect data on Effective Communication such as CCSSE and Graduating Student Survey results.

- The Director will forward the Institution-level Assessment Report to the QHEC, the Executive Cabinet, and the general College community before Welcome Back in August.

From the Provost's perspective:

- The Provost will use the academic administrative structure to see that the loop is closed, starting with the QHE Council and its initiatives, but also including FTLC and departmental professional development opportunities, Innovation Grant RFP process, changes in curricula, and other means.

Timeline for this Coming Year:

Step One (immediately)—Announce and distribute this assessment plan.

Step Two (as soon as possible)—Obtain definitive statement from the Curriculum Committee regarding the expectations embodied in the levels of performance standards in the rubrics we use (see bottom of page 5 and top of page 6).

Step Three (by beginning of April)—Identify 8-10 “pathfinder” departments that will lead the way in developing assessment plans focusing on Effective Communication. This will include identifying signature assignments, developing a sampling methodology, and writing assessment rubrics starting from a common source.

Step Four (May and June)—Pathfinder departments will work with the Outcomes Assessment Coordinator and/or the ePortfolio Director to complete their responsibilities as sketched in step three. This work will serve as a set of models for other departments.

Step Five (Fall Semester)—All other departments will use the work of the pathfinder departments to develop their own signature assignments, sampling methodologies, and assessment rubrics. Pathfinder department chairs and faculty will make themselves available to support the other departments, and the Outcomes Assessment Coordinator and the ePortfolio Director will also work with them.

Step Six (First day of Spring term)—All departments will be ready to collect data during the spring term on Effective Communication and other program outcomes. Departments that are ready early can collect data during the fall term.

Step Seven (by end of Spring term)—All departments will collect data.

Step Eight (by June 1st)—All departments will turn in to the Outcomes Assessment Office the results of their assessment.

Step Nine (Summer)—ePortfolio Director will conduct a meta-analysis of program assessments of Effective Communication and write a report for the Quality Higher Education Council.

Step Ten (Convocation and afterwards)—The assessment report will be broadly shared through various venues. The QHEC will make recommendations for college-wide response, and individual programs will decide how to respond, what interventions (if any) are needed, and when to follow-up on the efficacy of those interventions.

Step Eleven (Continuous)—Meanwhile, all departments will need to start the cycle over again for the next scheduled learning outcome.

The Importance of Semi-Standard Rubrics

The integrity of this plan to assess College-Wide Student Learning Outcomes depends heavily on SLCC faculty and administrators across the College coming to a common understanding about the design of the rubrics they will use to assess student work. While we want to avoid a one size fits all approach, we do want to ensure the following:

- When common rubrics *can* be used across disciplines, they *should* be used.
- When different rubrics are used across disciplines, they should start from a common source and be constructed according to the same basic standards and should reflect a common understanding regarding the levels of student performance.

To encourage various programs to use common rubrics, the QHEC will publicize common starting points, such as the AAC&U VALUE rubrics for written and oral communication at the end of this document.

With respect to the second bullet above, the QHEC should enforce certain standards with respect to rubrics that programs design for themselves. One standard would be to have the rubric contain *four levels of student performance* as indicated in the diagram below and the example following this proposal.¹ With this setup, for example, a department could designate average criterion performance scores of 2.9 to 2.5 as meriting attention and scores below 2.5 as meriting special or immediate attention.

Effective Comm Criteria	Levels of Performance			
	4 Exceeds Expectations	3 Meets Expectations	2 Below Expectations	1 Well Below Expectations
Criterion A		What does a 3 mean?		What does a 1 mean?
Criterion B				
Criterion C				(and so on)

Another standard would be to use as many common criteria within the rubric as is feasible, which will facilitate meta-analysis across disciplines and programs. Departments should build their rubrics from a common starting point, such as the Written Communication Rubric appended to this plan. Departments are encouraged to use the same criteria headings, but tailor their specific meanings to better address the manner in which each criterion manifests itself in different programs. Having said that, departments may choose to drop criteria that are not relevant and add others that are important to the assessment of written communication in their programs.

¹ Why four? Many existing rubrics have four levels of student performance, including notably the AAC&U's VALUE rubrics that are targeted at many of the CWLOs present at SLCC.

A final standard would be to achieve a consensus regarding the approximate expectations embodied in each level of performance, regardless of the learning outcome being assessed. In the example above, does “meets expectations” mean that the student’s work met the faculty’s expectations of performance *on that particular assignment*, or does it mean that the student’s work met the faculty’s expectations of what should be expected of a student *who is about to graduate from SLCC*? That is an important distinction, and we would be much more confident in the validity of our meta-analysis if an authoritative body like the Gen Ed Committee or the Curriculum Committee came to an agreement about this.

As long as these basic standards are respected, departments would be free to design rubrics as they see fit. For example, please consult the written communication rubric on page 8 of this document. Imagine that Department A and B both see the relevance of students’ written work to adhere to the “genre and disciplinary conventions” that are embodied in that criterion in the rubric. For Department A, the language in the cells specifying performance levels from “well-below expectations” to “exceeds expectations” will focus on the writing conventions that are most pertinent to their program(s), while Department B will focus on the conventions that are most pertinent to their programs(s). Those kinds of differences are essential to the validity of program-level assessment, but are largely tangential to the meta-analysis that will look at the ability of students to adhere to “genre and disciplinary conventions” across the College.

The Importance of Standard Reporting Methods

Finally, it is important for departments to report their results in a standard fashion. We suggest that results be reported as follows:

- A copy of the assignment(s) and the rubric used to assess student work.
- A copy of the rubric with the cell descriptors empty, replaced by:
 - The percent of students in the sample who placed into each cell.
 - The number of students in the sample who placed into each cell.
 - The average score for each criterion in the rubric.
- The sampling methodology used by the department.
- The overall number of student assignments in the sample.
- The program’s plans to respond to the results.

What Will the Overall Assessment Report Look Like?

We envision a straightforward report with the following sections:

1. Introduction
2. Methods
3. Effective Communication: Strengths of SLCC’s Students
 - Direct measures
 - Indirect measures
4. Effective Communication: Weaknesses of SLCC’s Students
 - Direct measures
 - Indirect measures

5. Effective Communication: Unclear Results
6. Recommendations
7. Follow-up (Appended later when recommended interventions have taken hold and new data collected)

How will the meta-analysis be conducted?

It would proceed as follows:

- Start by sorting the dimensions of Effective Communication as defined by SLCC's programs by looking at the various criteria in the rubrics used across the College to assess student work.
- Group those dimensions together (e.g., all the criteria that speak to dimensions like "supporting claims with evidence" or "mechanics of standard English").
- Examine the data for each dimension of Effective Communication across the disciplines, coming to a determination as to whether the data indicate strengths, weaknesses, or are too muddy to make a conclusion.
- Write a short analysis of each dimension in the strengths and weakness categories, and explain why those dimensions in the "muddy" category are there.
- With respect to weaknesses, make recommendations that might help the College better serve students on the dimensions of Effective Communication.