

Academic Assessment Review

March 28, 2011

Background:

During the 2010-11 academic year, the newly elected Academic Assessment Committee evaluated all assessment plans and findings of the forty-one academic programs who had submitted plans (note that eleven programs did not submit plans, primarily programs which are new or where there is new leadership). A process was established in the fall of 2010 which included:

- refining the rubric used the prior year by the assessment staff,
- assigning two readers to each assessment plan who collaborated on the review,
- creating a format for a final FEEDBACK report to each academic program.

Each pair of readers used the rubric to examine each plan independently and then communicated in person or online until they agreed on the strengths and suggestions for each program's plan. Individuals were assigned randomly so that each team member would have the opportunity for conversation and consensus building with every other team member. In this way, members of the committee could move more quickly to a consistent understanding of the rubric and plan evaluation process.

The committee members made an effort to keep comments focused by identifying at least one strength and by providing suggestions for one or two areas that might be targeted for improvement in each program's plan.

Summary of Committee Reviews:

The committee is interested in validating that the feedback being given to academic programs is consistent, and that the rubric is applied consistently to all programs.

All committee feedback was imported into NVivo9 and coded with the following categories: Assessment Plans, Learning Outcomes, Evidence and Criteria, Action and Follow-up, Findings and Faculty Involvement, all categories from the scoring rubric. The following table shows the number of references in each category.

Category	# of References
Assessment Plans	54
Learning Outcomes	65
Evidence and Criteria	73
Action and Follow-up	31
Findings	26
Faculty Involvement	13

It is interesting that the categories with the largest number of references were "Evidence and Criteria", followed by "Learning Outcomes" and "Assessment Plans". Given the committee's focus on providing

“next steps”, this appears to confirm that academic programs are still refining their learning outcome statements and ensuring that their evidence and criteria are defined well enough for an outside reader to understand.

In examining the content of our feedback, we found the following highlights:

- We are impressed by (1) the number of programs that have appropriate sources of evidence (2) tied to appropriately stated outcomes (Reviewers commented on this regularly).
- We frequently encouraged programs to expand their sources of evidence or be more clear or specific about the evaluative criteria used when examining evidence.

In addition to the above analysis, we also reviewed the scoring on the rubrics. These scored rubrics were not returned to programs since they were used only as a reviewer communication tool during this first year. However, we were able to get an overall picture of program assessment achievement to this point. A rough analysis suggests that 35% of the programs are in the “Developing” stage, 42% are in the “Established” stage and 8% are in the “Exemplary” stage.

Comparison to 2009 Findings

Overall, we reported in 2009 that 22% of the assessment plans were in the “established” category. This year, we have placed 42% of the reviewed programs in the “established” category. Last year we stated that fewer than ten programs were in the “undeveloped” category; this year we have only one program in that category. Last year we recommended that programs “write specific, measurable, useful and meaningful student learning outcomes in terms of what students will know or do”; the number of positive comments in this area shows that academic programs worked this year to improve their outcome statements. Many programs showed improvements in performance criteria that were tied to specific assignments, with rubrics or scoring systems attached to their plans. There were several programs with excellent documentation in this area.

Next steps:

The lack of references in the “findings” and “action and follow-up” categories shows that not all programs have been through a full cycle of data collection, analysis and results with follow-up on any actions/innovations made. Although there are exemplary programs and several examples of full assessment, the majority of our programs should show progress in this area in the next assessment cycles.

We should note that this is the first time that consistent feedback has been given to departments, and therefore it is difficult to determine if the reviewers’ critiques were due to inadequate plans or our documentation process. We will collect feedback from programs to determine if in fact they have additional documentation which was simply not submitted with our reporting forms. This feedback will be collected and reviewed by the committee for possible improvements in our review process.