# Student Learning, Assessment, and Accreditation

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Guiding Values


The Higher Learning Commission’s Criteria for Accreditation reflect a set of guiding values. HLC articulates these guiding values so as to offer a better understanding of the Criteria and the intentions that underlie them. Many of the Criteria for Accreditation should be understood in this light. HLC expects the governing board to ensure quality through its governance structures, with appropriate degrees of involvement and delegation. HLC emphasizes planning because planning is critical to sustaining quality. Assessment of student learning and focus on persistence and completion are ways in which the institution improves and thus assures the quality of its teaching and learning. HLC expects that institutions have the standards, the processes, and the will for quality assurance in depth and throughout its educational offerings.

Focus on student learning: For the purpose of accreditation, the Higher Learning Commission regards the teaching mission of any institution as primary. Institutions will have other missions, such as research, health care and public service, and these other missions may have a shaping and highly valuable effect on the education that the institution provides. In the accreditation process, these missions should be recognized and considered in relation to the teaching mission. A focus on student learning encompasses every aspect of students’ experience at an institution: how they are recruited and admitted; costs they are charged and how they are supported by financial aid; how well they are informed and guided before and through their work at the institution; the breadth, depth, currency and relevance of the learning they are offered; their education through cocurricular offerings; the effectiveness of their programs; and what happens to them after they leave the institution.

A culture of continuous improvement: Continuous improvement is the alternative to stagnation. Minimum standards are necessary but far from sufficient to achieve acceptable quality in higher education, and the strongest institutions will stay strong through ongoing aspiration. HLC includes improvement as one of two major strands in all its pathways, the other being assurance that member institutions meet the Criteria and the Federal Requirements. A process of assessment is essential to continuous improvement, and therefore a commitment to assessment should be deeply embedded in an institution’s activities. Assessment applies not only to student learning and educational outcomes but to an institution’s approach to improvement of institutional effectiveness. For student learning, a commitment to assessment would mean assessment at the program level that proceeds from clear goals, involves faculty at all points in the process, and analyzes the assessment results; it would also mean that the institution improves its programs or ancillary services or other operations on the basis of those analyses. Institutions committed to improvement review their programs regularly and seek external judgment, advice or benchmarks in their assessments. Because in recent years the issues of persistence and completion have become central to public concern about higher education, the current Criteria direct attention to them as possible indicators of quality and foci for improvement, without prescribing either the measures or outcomes.

Evidence-based institutional learning and self-presentation: Assessment and the processes an institution learns from should be well grounded in evidence. Statements of belief and intention have important roles in an institution’s presentation of itself, but for the quality assurance function of
accreditation, evidence is critical. Institutions should be able to select evidence based on their particular purposes and circumstances.

**Assumed practices: Faculty Roles and Qualifications**


Faculty participate substantially in:

1. oversight of the curriculum—its development and implementation, academic substance, currency, and relevance for internal and external constituencies;
2. assurance of consistency in the level and quality of instruction and in the expectations of student performance;
3. establishment of the academic qualifications for instructional personnel;
4. analysis of data and appropriate action on assessment of student learning and program completion.

**Statement on Student Learning, Assessment, and Accreditation (2007)**


Among the public’s many expectations of higher education, the most basic is that students will learn, and in particular that they will learn what they need to know to attain personal success and fulfill their public responsibilities in a global and diverse society. Student learning is central to all higher education organizations; therefore, these organizations define educational quality—one of their core purposes—by how well they achieve their declared mission relative to student learning. A focus on achieved student learning is critical not only to a higher education organization’s ability to promote and improve curricular and co-curricular learning experiences and to provide evidence of the quality of educational experiences and programs, but also to fulfill the most basic public expectations and needs of higher education.

In October 1989, the Commission first posited that assessment of student learning is an essential component of every organization’s effort to evaluate overall organizational effectiveness. In February 2003, The Higher Learning Commission adopted a newly revised position statement on assessment of student learning (see Section 3.4-2 of the *Handbook of Accreditation, Third Edition*) to reaffirm and strengthen this position. Through the Criteria for Accreditation and multiple Core Components, the Commission makes clear the centrality of student learning to effective higher education organizations and extends and deepens its commitment to and expectations for assessment. Indeed, the Commission asserts that assessment is more than a response to demands for accountability, more than a means for curricular improvement. Effective assessment is best understood as a strategy for understanding, confirming, and improving student learning.
Six fundamental questions serve as prompts for conversations about student learning and the role of assessment in affirming and improving that learning:

1. How are your stated student learning outcomes appropriate to your mission, programs, degrees, and students?
2. What evidence do you have that students achieve your stated learning outcomes?
3. In what ways do you analyze and use evidence of student learning?
4. How do you ensure shared responsibility for student learning and for assessment of student learning?
5. How do you evaluate and improve the effectiveness of your efforts to assess and improve student learning?
6. In what ways do you inform the public and other stakeholders about what students are learning---and how well?

In using these questions, an organization should ground its conversations in its distinct mission, context, commitments, goals and intended outcomes for student learning. In addition to informing ongoing improvement in student learning, these conversations will assist organizations and peer reviewers in discerning evidence for the Criteria and Core Components.

The fundamental questions and the conversations they prompt are intended to support a strategy of inquiry into student learning. Further, the questions are intended to support this strategy of inquiry, built on principles of good practice, as a participative and iterative process that:

- Provides information regarding student learning,
- Engages stakeholders in analyzing and using information on student learning to confirm and improve teaching and learning,
- Produces evidence that confirms achievement of intended student learning outcomes, and
- Guides broader educational and organizational improvement.

In other words, organizations assess student learning in meaningful, useful, and workable ways to evaluate how they are achieving their commitments and to act on the results in ways that advance student learning and improve educational quality. Effective assessment of student learning is a matter of commitment, not a matter of compliance.

The centrality of student learning and the fundamental nature of assessment as a strategy for understanding and improving that learning are embedded directly into the Criteria and Core Components. Thus, peer reviewers seeking evidence for the Criteria and Core Components will discern evidence of the commitment to student learning and the meaningful use of assessment to confirm and improve student learning. Neither the Criteria nor Core Components prescribe specific methods for assessing and improving student learning. It is inevitable and desirable that diverse organizations exhibit a wide variety of approaches and embed assessment of student learning in a variety of institutional forms and processes. Thus, the Commission and its peer reviewers will not approach the review with expectations for specific ways in which assessment efforts are structured and implemented, but rather with a focus on student learning and the use of assessment to confirm and improve that learning within the context and mission of the organization.
To remain focused on student learning and assessment as a strategy for confirming and improving that learning, peer reviewers may use the fundamental questions as prompts to engage faculty, staff, students, and administrators in conversations about the organization’s (a) commitment to improving student learning and educational quality; (b) sustained effort to collect, analyze, and use data and information on student learning; (c) evidence that students have achieved the learning intended; (d) shared responsibility for student learning and assessment of student learning; and (e) successes and challenges in improving student learning and educational quality through assessment. These conversations will assist peer reviewers in understanding the organization’s commitment to student learning and approaches to assessment of that learning within the organization’s context and mission. Further, the conversation will assist in discerning areas for consultation and in identifying and validating evidence related to the Criteria and Core Components. Peer reviewers will base their accreditation-related judgments and recommendations on this evidence as it relates to the Criteria and Core Components.

Finally, the Commission realizes that assessment of student learning is an ongoing, dynamic process that requires substantial time; that is often marked by fits and starts; and that takes long-term commitment and leadership. It is reasonable for organizations to use different approaches and timetables in implementing their assessment of student learning efforts. Nevertheless, the Commission expects that each organization can demonstrate a sustained effort to implement assessment processes that are workable, reasonable, meaningful, and useful in confirming and improving student learning and in assuring and advancing broader educational and organizational quality.

**Criteria for Accreditation 3C, 4B, and 5C**

[http://policy.hlcommission.org/Policies/criteria-for-accreditation.html](http://policy.hlcommission.org/Policies/criteria-for-accreditation.html)

3.C. The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.

4.B. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
The institution’s processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

5.C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.

HLC Feedback Report – 2003 Visit

Inadequately Resolved Challenges: The Team was able to confirm genuine attempts to address each of the concerns noted by the 1993 visit team. The current Team notes, however, that progress in the areas of assessment, library resources, and diversity in hiring continue to be slow in coming and remain to this day significant challenges for PPCC.

Consultations of the Team: Assessment of Student Academic Achievement

The PPCC Assessment Plan that was accepted by the HLC in 1996 provided a platform and a process for assessment activities to begin. After several years of collecting data in a number of areas, the college determined that data on student learning, or outcomes assessment, was not being done. Rather, the process was assessing Institutional effectiveness. Although this is not "outcomes assessment", it is essential that the college continue to collect data on effectiveness indicators which are typically tied to a college's strategic plan.

The lack of systematic process to assess student learning outcomes was identified as a concern by the college, and the College Outcomes Assessment Team (COAT) was given the charge to address the assessment of student learning. A process of identifying "communication skills" necessary across the college programs was begun in January of 2003. In discussions with the COAT and the Director of assessment, the Team suggested that the Assessment Plan of PPCC be revised and assessment activities of the college include assessment beyond the goals published earlier this year. Using the information available from the HLC web site resources, the Team suggests the following:

- Program-level learning outcomes as well as general education outcomes need to be identified. These learning outcomes should be published in the catalog, or other readily available document, for students and the public.

- Assessment processes or tools to measure the attainment of the outcomes should be delineated, as should the criteria for learning expectations. Dr. Lopez, former Associate Director of the HLC, has identified a number of direct measures that should be considered: capstone experiences; performance evaluations in labs, clinical and internship performance; written tests of specified outcomes; portfolios; and locally developed tests, for example.
Data on these outcomes should be **systematically collected and then analyzed by program faculty.** These results should assist faculty in identifying areas that need improvements or adjustments to curriculum and/or instruction.

A process for **reporting assessment activities and documenting results** should be identified in the plan.

An **annual assessment report should be published.**

**Involvement of faculty in all programs** is essential; administrators need to be available to provide support; advisory committees should be consulted and informed of the activities; students need to be involved at all levels and throughout the process.

Members of the COAT committee and other faculty members expressed concern with having to implement yet another change of any sort at the college. **Assessment of student learning is not merely a capricious requirement from the HLC; it is a commitment to student learning and student success.** It should be noted that many examples of a "culture of assessment" already exist at PPCC, and these need to be highlighted and documented. For example, the Work Keys that have been identified in programs will yield many "learning outcomes"; the state-wide general education curriculum has learning expectations embedded and already defined for many areas; many occupational programs that have undergone a five-year evaluation have outcomes assessment as an integral component already.

**Linking the assessment of student learning to the college's Strategic Plan and Mission** are key to the success of the process. **Student learning should be an inherent and consistent goal at the college.**

**PPCC must make a commitment to the assessment process,** especially during the revision and beginning implementation stage. A number of staff development activities have been done at PPCC over the last year. These need to continue as the revised plan is completed and the implementation begins. Continued support of the assessment activities is essential, and is important to have a coordinator (faculty or administrative) to provide specific assistance and feedback to individual instructors as well as program or department faculty.

Across the country, colleges have been focusing on outcomes assessment for many years. There are numerous "best practices" published in periodical and trade books that are readily available. Some suggestions are:

- **How Do They Know We Know - Evaluating Adult Learning,** published by Jossey- Bass, 1998. Written by Jane Vella, Paula Berardinelli and Jim Burrow. Besides providing an easy to follow assessment primer, there are three fine examples of evaluating learning in existing programs that would give teachers a model and lead to further analysis. A glossary is also included.

- **A Teacher's Guide to Performance-Based Learning and Assessment,** published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development in 1996. This book guides faculty through the analysis of developing performance-based tasks.

- **Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing and Improving Assessment in Higher Education,** published by the Higher Learning Commission. This book provides a comprehensive guide to the assessment process, including how to design, implement, and improve assessment programs. It covers various assessment methods and provides practical advice for faculty and administrators.

• Student Learning: A Central Focus for Institutions of Higher Education, published in March of 2002 by Alverno College Institute in Milwaukee, Wisconsin offers contributions from over twenty-five colleges on assessment practices.

• The Journal of Applied Research in the Community College published a special Outcomes Assessment issue in the Spring of 2002 (Volume 9r #2).

Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention:

PPCC's strategic plan is widely accepted and supported by the college community. It establishes a clear blueprint for addressing priority near-term initiatives, aligns well with the budget cycle, and provides a solid foundation for decision-making. Despite the soundness of the college's strategic planning process and documents, the college has failed to integrate the assessment of student academic achievement into its planning process. This oversight should be addressed immediately.

The Team was unable to confirm either a written definition or a shared philosophy of general education among PPCC's faculty, staff, or administrators. Members of PPCC's Curriculum and Instruction Practices Committee and the College Outcomes Assessment Team (COAT) indicated that they believed that there was a statewide definition of general education in Colorado, although they were unclear as to what this definition was or where to find it. A clear understanding of the goals and purposes of general education, however, is a Commission expectation of organizations of higher learning, and addressing this concern will also be important in addressing the Team's concerns regarding the assessment of student academic achievement that will be noted later in this report.

Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up:

The College needs an updated assessment plan that is systemic, ongoing and supported college-wide. Program learning outcomes as well as general education outcomes should be identified. Assessment tools and processes to measure student learning in these areas must also be identified, along with criteria for performance. A process to document the assessment activities is also necessary in order to make sure the analysis of assessment results will lead to improved student learning.

This revised assessment plan needs to be implemented across the college, and the leadership for this effort should be clearly defined. The COAT Committee may need to revise its vision and goals to ensure the assessment activities meet the criteria of the HLC as well as enhance the college's commitment to student learning.

PPCC's work in revising its assessment efforts will need to include linking assessment to strategic planning and budgeting. The plan will also need to include using assessment data to make continuous improvements to the College's academic programs.
**Recommendation of the Team:** Although PPCC has provided a pattern of evidence sufficient to fulfill most of this Criterion, the Team recommends Commission follow-up addressing - assessment of student academic achievement and proper filing of all credentials for hiring of full-time and adjunct faculty.

Monitoring: **Focused visit on assessment** of student academic during academic year 2006-2007.

Rationale and Expectations: While it is clear that many individuals are actively working to define and implement an assessment program at PPCC, the Team finds the College's current work and expertise in assessment to be introductory at best. Measurable performance outcomes for all programs were not available, clear procedures and deadlines for capturing/documenting academic achievement were not available, and there is no evidence of widespread use of assessment data to improve the teaching and learning process.

The Team recommends a focused visit to both assist and encourage PPCC in the design and implementation of a comprehensive learning outcomes assessment model for all programs throughout the College.

**HLC Feedback Report – 2014 Visit**

[https://www.ppcc.edu/about/college-accreditations](https://www.ppcc.edu/about/college-accreditations)

Page 4: That visit resulted in the requirement of a focused visit on assessment of student academic learning during academic year 2006-2007. In lieu of the return focus visit, the College applied for and was accepted into the HLC’s Academy for Assessment of Student Learning. Since joining the Academy in 2006, PPCC has completed one project on assessment of general education and begun another project in 2011 to build on actions to improve students’ abilities to think critically and to establish assessment as a practice within student services areas.

Page 5: Three main areas of concern were identified by the 2003 Team: assessment, library resources, and diversity in hiring. The Team believes that PPCC has made adequate progress in addressing these concerns. However, the Team believes that PPCC still needs to focus institutional attention on assessment and diversity of the workforce.

Page 8: One of the PPCC general education learning outcomes involves community skills which includes diversity. The institution does assess this goal although evidence provided does not indicate how well the goal is being achieved.

Page 15: Conversations with faculty from across the college indicate that the institution has succeeded in creating a culture of assessment where the faculty are the driving force.

Page 15: Since its inception in 2002 the faculty-led College Outcomes Assessment Team (COAT) has made great strides in organizing for assessment and in identifying general education outcomes (see above). Also, assessment of general education was the project which the institution implemented as part of the HLC Assessment Academy. However, COAT could produce no evidence of having used the results of assessment to affect curricular changes to improve student outcomes. It is imperative that institution begins to “close the loop” so that it can demonstrate that it has a meaningful assessment
process for all courses, including general education. The Team believes that COAT and PPCC are off to a strong start and, by continuing to make assessment a priority, it will ultimately develop a mature assessment process.

Page 15: The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.

Page 20: A newly implemented Program Review process provides a means for all courses to establish goals, assess them, and take action to improve learning during a cycle that will cover every academic department no less than every seven years. While this shows great potential, it has not been proven in practice yet, nor has it been codified with approved institutional policies and procedures to assure proper use.

Page 20: While the Team examined several examples of assessing general education goals, evidence of assessment of learning in all courses was sporadic. The use of assessment findings mirrored this pattern with institutional data indicating that only 33% of departments used findings to improve curriculum. The continued implementation of the nascent Program Review process has the potential to address these issues.

Page 21: Evidence showed participation by many faculty in the assessment process, including work with the HLC Academy for Assessment of Student Learning and during the development of the new Program Review process.

Page 22: While the assessment of its General Education Program is well established, the College recently developed and implemented processes that have the potential to provide continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of their programs for student learning in all courses and in the student support arena. Preliminary results are positive, but the efficacy of these programs cannot be finally judged without more data through continued use.

Page 22: In addition, PPCC has established processes for evaluating and improving its programs and services which promote and support student learning. However, there is limited evidence that the processes are leading to continuous improvement because there has not been time to complete many of the assessment cycles. Therefore, the Team believes that follow-up is necessary to ensure the potential is being realized.

Page 25: While the evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting are closely linked; the process of linking assessment of student learning is not as clearly defined. The institution indicated in the self-study that increasing funding of the College Outcomes Assessment Team (COAT) qualifies as a link to budgeting. However, there is no explanation of how the assessment results are then used to tie with the operations, planning and budget.

Page 26: As noted previously, while PPCC collects and reports an array of data elements, there is little evidence that the institution has used much of it in the past for institutional improvement. The current processes, strategic function, and administrative structure hold great promise that an effective institutional effectiveness program will evolve in a short period of time.
Page 28: The College must submit a progress report to the Higher Learning that provides evidence of:

- **Effective implementation of the newly revised Program Review format with evidence that the process leads to continuous improvement of programs.**
- **Evidence demonstrating the use of results obtained from assessment activities to improve student learning.**
- **Effective implementation of assessment of student learning in all student support areas with evidence that data obtained from institutional research is being used to improve institutional effectiveness.**
- **Official approval of institutional practices and procedures to assure the effective use of the new Program Review process and of the assessment of student learning in all student support areas.**

**Rationale:** The institution has developed system for assessment of student learning in academic programs and support services and it has developed institutional research processes to evaluate institutional effectiveness but these processes need time to prove their efficacy.

**Linda Suskie’s observations and suggestions – 2015 Visit**

On November 13, 2015, Linda Suskie visited PPPCC to conduct two workshops on assessing student learning and to meet with the Assessment Team. She found in PPCC a campus community that is dedicated to its students and ready to move to the next level of excellence. Among PPCC’s many strengths:

- Patricia Diawara, the Assessment Team, and the staff of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) including Sharon Bjorkman and Kristy Callihan are all tremendous assets to PPCC. They are committed to and supportive of one another; they have a very good understanding of assessment; they have worked incredibly hard; and they have helped PPCC collect a good deal of data and information regarding student learning at PPCC. They are campus assessment champions; they “get” the importance and value of assessing student learning.
- PPCC’s leadership team supports student learning assessment and demonstrated this through active presence and participation during my visit. Their support is key to developing an enduring culture of assessment that ensures ongoing compliance with HLC criteria and—far more important—helps take PPCC to even greater levels of excellence.
- There is a strong core of faculty and administrators who are high-energy and enthusiastic about continuing to improve teaching and learning.
- Many faculty and administrators understand the importance and value of assessment and are ready to continue to work on assessment.
- Assessment of student learning is led by faculty, not administrators. Most academic departments are engaged in some kind of assessment.
- PPCC is moving from global assessments such as the Watson-Glaser toward course-embedded assessments of general education learning outcomes, which faculty are likely to find more useful in understanding and improving student achievement.
- There have been some assessment-based improvements in teaching, although these changes have often been made by individual faculty rather than pervasively.
Despite these strengths, student learning assessment at PPCC is not yet where it should be.

1. Not all degrees have adopted clear statements of program-wide student learning outcomes or assessed them, and not all gen ed outcomes have been recently assessed. **PPCC is thus not yet in compliance with the following HLC Standards:**
   a. 4.B.2: The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs
   b. 3.B.3: Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information, in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work, and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments
   c. 3. The institution provides high quality education (PPCC does not have yet consistent, pervasive assessment evidence to demonstrate this.)
   d. 3.A.1: Courses and programs...require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded (PPCC does not yet have consistent, pervasive assessment evidence to demonstrate this.)

2. Student learning assessment at PPCC does not yet consistently follow good practices.
   a. Some departments appear to be relying on assessments conducted by a single faculty member from single classes, with other department faculty disengaged. Martha Stassen, an assessment expert from the University of Massachusetts, has stated the issue here well: “Individual course-based assessment projects can be very informative. But departmental assessment approaches that focus solely on the effectiveness of outcomes of individual courses can have three undesirable consequences: (1) encouraging individual faculty involvement (the instructor of the course) but not necessarily the participation of the larger departmental faculty; (2) conflating the assessment of program or general education outcomes with the evaluation of individual instructors or courses; and (3) generating results that are not necessarily representative of the department’s student population as a whole, possibly skewing the department’s understanding of their students’ performance in meting program learning goals.”
   b. Some departments appear to be focusing too heavily on assessing content knowledge in introductory courses rather than intellectual skills developed in multiple courses.
   c. Assessment plans are for only one year out; there is no multi-year plan to ensure that every gen ed outcome and every program outcome is assessed in a timely fashion. **PPCC is thus not yet in compliance with HLC Standard 4.B.4: Processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice.**

3. Recent assessment results appear to be used largely to make modifications to individual courses. No one appears to be reviewing assessment results across courses and departments to identify pervasive concerns with student learning that need college-wide attention (such as, perhaps, pervasive concerns with students’ writing skills or analysis skills). There is also no process to ensure that those pervasive concerns are addressed in college plans and budgets. **PPCC is thus not yet in compliance with HLC Standard 5.C.2: The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.**
The following action steps are intended to move assessment at PPCC to the next level of maturity, from asking departments to assess any course or goal of interest to them to asking departments to conduct systematic assessments of:

- general education outcomes
- program learning outcomes just before graduation and at one or more key “cornerstone” points to ensure that students are on track to demonstrate successful achievement by the time they graduate

Moving assessment to these levels will help ensure compliance with HLC standards as well as help move the quality of a PPCC education to the next level of excellence.

1. Ensure that PPCC’s assessment of its general education curriculum meets HLC standards by the time PPCC submits its next report to HLC (AY2018/2019):
   a. Every gen ed course has justifiably rigorous standards for student achievement of the course’s designated statewide learning outcome(s).
   b. Every gen ed course has assessed student achievement of its designated statewide learning outcome(s).
   c. Gen ed assessment results have been analyzed across courses in each requirement to identify any pervasive concerns with student achievement.
   d. Pervasive concerns have been addressed through improvements in curriculum design, improvements in teaching methods and, as appropriate, through college plans and resource allocations.

2. Ensure that PPCC’s assessments of its degree and certificate programs meet HLC standards by the time PPCC submits its next report to HLC:
   a. Every degree and certificate program has clearly articulated key program-level learning outcomes.
   b. Every degree and certificate program has mapped its program outcomes to its required courses, to ensure that every student has sufficient opportunity to achieve every outcome before completing the program.
   c. Every degree and certificate program has justifiably rigorous standards for student achievement of the program’s learning outcomes by the time students complete the program.
   d. Every degree and certificate program has assessed student achievement of the program’s learning outcomes. The assessments focus on achievement as students approach completion of the program. Faculty may also choose to assess foundational level achievement of program learning outcomes at earlier point(s) in the program, to ensure that students are on track for success in subsequent courses.
   e. Every degree and certificate program has analyzed assessment results holistically to identify any concerns with student achievement.
f. Significant concerns with student achievement—including those that cross multiple programs—are addressed through improvements in curriculum design, improvements in teaching methods and, as appropriate, through college plans and resource allocations.

3. Every gen ed and program learning goal does not need to be assessed every semester or every year, but the assessment cycle (in which all gen ed or program goals are assessed) should not run longer than two or three years. Assessments yielding concerns about student achievement should be repeated the most frequently; assessments with strong results may be repeated less often.

4. Have a clearly articulated purpose and audience for assessment plans and reports. Review the templates so the reports provide sufficient information to achieve that purpose; eliminate extraneous information from the templates.

5. Continue to support CETL in offering a thorough program of professional development to faculty on how to teach. The minute paper comments I collected during my visit suggest that faculty most want to learn how to create rubrics, how to articulate learning outcomes, how to create multiple choice tests and simply how to teach better. For some faculty, collaborating with colleagues appears to be a new concept; provide support to these faculty as they feel their way.

6. So gen ed assessments have maximum impact, focus initially on assessing high-enrollment gen ed courses. Schedule assessments in low-enrollment gen ed courses later in the multi-year cycle.

7. Eventually, when resources permit, consider an assessment information management system to ease the burden of recording and analyzing assessment evidence. Include faculty and IT staff in the process to evaluate such systems.