2017-19 FACULTY HANDBOOK FOR ASSESSMENT

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I. Welcome

The PSC community considers learning to be a guiding value, and we are committed to the assessment of that student learning as a College. This guidebook is a part of the framework necessary in the creation of a sustained, thriving culture of assessment. Inside you’ll find practical information, including forms and cycle schedules, along with training and guiding materials. I also want to encourage you to spend some time on the PSC assessment web page, where we have even more resources, for assessment in general as well as specific to PSC.

Carolyn Ciesla
Dean, Learning Resources and Assessment

II. What is assessment? Why do we assess?

Assessment can be defined as one or more processes that identify, collect, and prepare data to evaluate the attainment of student learning outcomes, program outcomes, or departmental performance objectives. Assessment is a central element in the overall quality of teaching and learning in higher education. It provides the administration and faculty of educational institutions opportunities to monitor the attainment of student learning outcomes and to receive feedback regarding the effectiveness of academic programs. The overall goal of academic assessment is to improve student learning.

Assessment can help departments, programs, instructors, and students to improve the teaching and learning that takes place in our institution. As programs conduct assessments, they examine patterns of student learning: Which moments in the curriculum seem to help improve student outcomes? Which concepts do students appear to struggle with by the end of a semester? This information is then used in many ways to improve each aspect of a program; for instance, to revise the curriculum, rework the course learning outcomes, or offer opportunities for professional development so instructors can better meet their students’ needs.

In addition to enabling program improvement, assessment reports are part of the accreditation process. Prairie State College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (NCA). Also, every five years, the Illinois Community College Board reviews PSC’s programs, a process that requires evidence of student learning.

III. History of assessment at PSC

Over the past 10 years, PSC has struggled to create a broad culture of assessment, but in 2016 took an important step in that direction with the creation of the Assessment Council (AC).

Historically, the College recognized that faculty would drive the assessment process, as it focused primarily on student learning that took place in classes and programs offered at the College. Working
with their deans and other administrative support, faculty were charged with assessing student learning in their various classes, disciplines and programs. In 2006, the collective bargaining agreement between full-time faculty and the Board of Trustees established an Outcomes Assessment Committee to lead and coordinate the College’s assessment efforts. The idea was good in that the committee was comprised of faculty who were elected as department chairs, but by 2015-16, the College recognized that although assessment was strong in some areas, a culture of assessment had not been established in a broader sense. Leadership from administration contributed to the idea of an expanded committee that would actively oversee not only the classroom and program assessment, but assessment throughout the college. Membership would include key administrative and managerial personnel, in addition to the academic department chairs, and would have broader responsibilities for assessment throughout the College.

In the spring of 2016, it was decided that the AC would begin its work that fall. A steering team met during the summer of 2016 to assemble a conceptual framework for the new AC, which was then presented to all the members of the council at the beginning of Fall 2016. Key considerations included the Council’s charge, membership, duties, and meeting schedule. Throughout 2016-17, the Assessment Council focused efforts on systemizing discipline and program assessments and improving communication with faculty to increase participation in student learning outcomes assessment across all academic divisions. The focus in 2017-18 was on co-curricular assessment, general education outcomes assessment, and program-level (for AAS degrees) assessment. Moving forward, the Council will bring in additional areas of the college.

The result of these efforts has been an Assessment Council that provides support, leadership, and coordination to the College. It offers professional development to support coordinators developing their plans, and feedback to support coordinators in creating meaningful and actionable plans. The AC develops and promotes a vision for assessment at the College and establishes best practices to follow, ensuring that assessment is completed at the course, discipline, program, co-curricular, and general education levels. (See Appendix A for Summary Charge and Membership of the Assessment Council).

IV. Principles of assessment

PSC assessment is guided by the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning (see Appendix D). In short, PSC’s guiding assessment principles assume:

- Assessment should be “intellectually compelling, professionally rewarding, and relatively unburdensome” (Angelo [in Banta, 2002]).
- Assessment should be cultivated throughout the College in academic, co-curricular, and non-instructional areas.
- Assessment should be used to measure, improve, and document what the College does.
- Assessment should involve full-time and part-time faculty, staff, administration, students, and members of the community.
- Assessment should be an ongoing process of reflection and improvement.
• Assessment results should be shared appropriately with the community served by the College.
• Assessment is separate from the faculty evaluation process and assessment results are never used to evaluate faculty performance in the classroom.

V. Kinds of assessment on campus

Assessment at Prairie State College is driven by two primary questions: What have students learned? How do we know they’ve learned it? There are three ways Prairie State College answers these questions:

**Discipline assessment** examines student learning across a discipline, a range of courses, or all sections of a single course. It can help faculty align courses to achieve coherence throughout a course sequence and can highlight the relationship between student learning outcomes and curricular decisions. Discipline assessment can show what students have learned in a course, regardless of who is teaching it. Faculty members are encouraged to work together within their departments to investigate urgent questions about teaching and learning. Faculty members conduct discipline assessment annually.

**Program assessment** examines student learning across a particular degree or certificate, such as an A.A.S. degree or career-related certificate program. The program assessment process helps faculty members align course-level outcomes and curriculum requirements to the degree or certificate. Program-level learning outcomes are often identified by a licensure or certification exam and/or other industry and employer standards. Program outcomes are adapted by the faculty to reflect the student’s acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes throughout the curriculum. Faculty members assess programs annually.

**General education outcomes assessment** examines student learning across all disciplines and programs. Prairie State College has identified five general education learning outcomes that encapsulate the core knowledge and skills we believe equip students to develop personally, as critical thinkers, and as global citizens:

- **Communication**: Students will demonstrate skills for effective written and oral communication.
- **Creative Thinking**: Students will think, react, and work in an imaginative way characterized by a high degree of innovation, divergent thinking, and risk taking.
- **Cultural Understanding**: Students will demonstrate a global perspective, the ability to navigate and thrive within diverse communities and workplaces, and an appreciation for the values of diversity, equity, and sustainability.
- **Information Literacy**: Students will know when there is a need for information and be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share that information for the task at hand.
- **Problem Solving**: Students will locate and identify information, determine what problem exists, develop solutions, evaluate results, and extend results to new situations.
PSC’s general education learning outcomes can only be achieved across disciplines and throughout the college, not in a single course or program. The AC reviews student artifacts from a range of disciplines each year to understand patterns of student learning; then, it collaborates with colleagues across the college to determine how best to share and act on the results.

VI. Roles in Assessment

The primary responsibility for assessment belongs to program and discipline coordinators. Their role is to drive the four stages of the assessment cycle (see below) and to involve other faculty in their area. The deans, in collaboration with the AC, ensure assessment is conducted according to best practices and PSC’s timeline. Department chairs serve on the AC. A depiction of the relationships between and the flow of communication among these parties can be found in Appendix C.

VII. PSC Assessment Cycle

The following diagram illustrates the major components of the assessment process at PSC. Because assessment is a continuous improvement process, it can be conceptualized using the plan-do-study-act cycle.
1. Plan
What do you want to learn about how students are learning in your course or your program? The most rewarding and useful assessment projects are research projects that start with genuine curiosity about the quality of students’ learning, so that the “assessment” serves as a process of inquiry, reflection, and learning.

We have drawn inspiration from Peggy Maki’s (2010) *Assessing for Learning*. Maki recommends developing open-ended research questions for assessment. Consider what you want to learn about your students’ learning and why, as well as how your new knowledge will help you and your colleagues improve your teaching. For example, in one case Maki discusses, math faculty members ask, “What barriers were preventing students from successfully solving mathematical problem sets?” (p. 131). Maki describes how this basic question led math faculty members to make improvements to their teaching.

To help answer a broad, open-ended question, and to keep your research manageable, we recommend focusing on a single course-level student learning outcome (SLO) or program-level student learning outcome (PSL0). In addition, at PSC, we have decided to approach assessment as a demonstration of measurable improvements in students’ learning, and so we recommend developing a second research question that is more focused on a particular SLO and frames your original inquiry in measurable terms. For instance, the math question above could be narrowed down to a particular kind of mathematical problem set. In another example, a Communications research question might be “How well do students extemporaneously speak by the end of the semester?” That open-ended question can be narrowed down to assess whether X% of students who pass the class will score 5-6 on a 6-point scale of extemporaneous speaking (see Appendix E for more on selecting assessment methods).

Ideally, your project will include sections taught by full- and part-time faculty and sections taught in an online as well as face-to-face format. This diversity can also enrich the possibilities of your open-ended research question.

Next, we recommend you investigate how other researchers have already approached your research question and P/SLO, to determine if you can adapt an existing study or advance your field by considering student learning in a new light. For example, the PSC Psychology department wanted to measure self-efficacy in their students and were able to distribute an existing questionnaire to their students, rather than create their own from scratch. Resources to use include the South Metropolitan Higher Education Consortium (SMHEC), assessment fairs, and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL); additionally, the PSC Library can offer assistance (please see below).

In some instances, if you plan to use human subjects and share your results outside PSC, which is common in educational assessment, you might need Institutional Review Board approval. Beginning in the Fall of 2018, the Assessment Plan template form will ask coordinators to indicate how student privacy is maintained, and the Assessment Council and IRB together will design a question to include on plans so that those that need IRB approval will be flagged and sent on for that approval. For more
During the planning phase, coordinators must submit to assessment@prairiestate.edu either the Discipline or Program Assessment Plan. This form is located in the Assessment Academy in Desire2Learn (D2L), which can be accessed by all coordinators. See Appendix G for a sample completed Assessment Plan form. Submission deadlines are set by the AC and can be found on the PSC Assessment webpage.

Resources for planning:

- Jan Bonavia (Director, Institutional Effectiveness, Planning and Accreditation) can help with developing surveys, including online ones.
- Jessica Nastal-Dema (English faculty) can help with developing Student Learning Outcomes/Program Learning Outcomes and designing assessment projects.
- Carolyn Ciesla (Dean, Learning Resources and Assessment) can provide approval for assessment-related budgetary expenses, such as compensating adjunct faculty.
- Lisa Ziegler (Manager, Grant Services) can provide assistance with grant identification and applying for grants.
- Thane Montaner (Library faculty) can assist with locating relevant assessment research and other assessment projects.

2. Do

The next step in the assessment process is to determine what data you will need to answer your research question, and to obtain it. Some possibilities include doing an online survey, such as Survey Monkey, using student work already being collected but evaluating it in a novel manner, or creating a new assessment, such as a tenquestion assessment administered during class time to all students.

Resources for gathering data:

- Institutional Research can provide information on enrollment, student demographics, and success rates by course or by program.
- The ITR department has a Scantron machine that can output the results question by question as a text file. For more information, speak to the ITR Administrative Assistant.

3. Study

Once you have collected evidence of an outcome, the next step is to evaluate that evidence. Ideally, each artifact you collect will be scored. You will want to think about whose help you will need to enlist in order to do this. Scoring by hand using a rubric will likely involve the time and participation of other faculty members in your department and may involve time side aside for training. When appropriate, using an online survey or Scantron may allow you to automate the scoring, and in many cases you will be able to export the data to Excel to easily review the results.
Once you have reviewed the data, what are the implications of the results? This analysis will offer key insights into the teaching and learning about P/SLO you selected. Does your study provide interesting information beyond simply answering your research question? For example, if you gave a 10 question assessment over an outcome that has multiple components, you may be interested not only in how students did overall, but in differences in performance on the individual questions and/or components.

Most importantly, how will you “close the loop,” to use the results to improve teaching and learning? What specific changes can you make to your course or program based on the assessment project? What professional development and support (including monetary) and resources will your department need to implement these changes? For example, if you were assessing students’ understanding of mitosis and were disappointed in the results, a working group could design a new lesson on mitosis that uses best practices and distribute that lesson to all instructors of the course.

At the end of the study phase, coordinators must submit to assessment@prairiestate.edu either the Discipline or Program Assessment Report. This form is located in the Assessment Academy in Desire2Learn (D2L), which can be accessed by all coordinators. See Appendix H for a sample completed Assessment Report form. Submission deadlines are set by the Assessment Council and can be found on the PSC Assessment webpage.

Resources for evaluating data:

- Upon request, math department faculty may be able to help you evaluate your data and perform statistical analysis. This help will be most useful if you involve math faculty when formulating your research question and designing your assessment project.
- Some of the computers in the SSC have the statistical program Fathom installed on them, and you can request that ITR install it on your office computer. Fathom has a simple drag and drop interface that provides an easy way to analyze your data doing a confidence interval or a hypothesis test.

4. Act
In this final phase of the assessment cycle, you will be distributing your report and sharing results with colleagues in your department or program, as well as other important stakeholders, such as students, colleagues, administrators, and/or community members. In this step, you will also implement an improvement plan that looks toward how you will evaluate the implementation; often this marks the beginning of your new assessment cycle.

VIII. Assessment Timeline
PSC’s two-year assessment cycle offers faculty more opportunities throughout each phase of the cycle. Now, for instance, you can identify and pilot an assessment project or spend a semester reviewing scholarship in your field to determine whether a replicable study exists.
Group B* will be the first to use the two-year cycle, with reports due in Spring 2019.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Do</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Act</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Group B</td>
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*Group assignments can be found in Appendix B.
Appendix A
Summary charge and membership of the Assessment Council

Summary Charge

● The AC shall serve as a clearinghouse, a think tank for all activities involving assessment at the College
● The AC shall have a number of roles
  ○ Support role: to support faculty coordinators and others who are actively engaged in assessment
    ▪ Plan and provide professional development on assessment
    ▪ Maintain resources for assessment, including tutorials
    ▪ Encourage conversations and collaboration on assessment
    ▪ Serve as engaged, supportive readership at every stage of the assessment process.
    ▪ Provide constructive and critical feedback for all engaged in assessment
  ○ Leadership role: to establish a vision, standards, and goals for assessment at the College
    ▪ Develop and promote a vision for assessment at Prairie State College
    ▪ Facilitate a collaborative culture of student learning outcome assessment by engaging students, faculty, staff and administration in assessment activities across the institution at the general education, program, course, and co-curricular levels
    ▪ Analyze and articulate trends revealed through assessment of student learning outcomes at the College
    ▪ Establish “good practices” for effective assessment
  ○ Coordination role
    ▪ Gather and review assessment plans and reports
    ▪ Establish working groups as appropriate
    ▪ Recommend changes and improvements in assessment efforts
    ▪ Ensure that assessment is completed at the course, program, co-curricular, and general education levels.
    ▪ Provide opportunities to discuss assessment results, implications, and improvements.

Assessment Council membership

- Elected Department Chairs (12)
- Dean, Learning Resources and Assessment
- Vice President, Academic Affairs (ex officio)
- Vice President, Student Affairs (ex officio)
- Director, Institutional Effectiveness, Planning and Accreditation
- Director, Institutional Research and Planning
- Faculty Volunteers
- Representatives from CWGELO, Faculty Development Committee, and First Year Experience

AC will be co-chaired by an AC faculty member, elected annually, and by the Dean, Learning Resources and Assessment.
## Appendix B
### Discipline/Program Cycle Assignments

**Cycle A**
- Automotive
- Business
- Communication
- Dental Hygiene
- English
- Fine Arts
- Fitness and Exercise program
- Humanities/ Philosophy
- IT
- Library
- Math
- Nursing
- Photography
- Psychology
- Spanish

**Cycle B**
- ABE
- Biology
- CNA
- Chemistry
- Criminal Justice
- Developmental English
- Early Childhood Education
- Education
- ESL
- Fire Science Technology
- Graphic Communication
- HVAC
- History
- Industrial Electricity
- Manufacturing/ Welding/ CADMD
- Music
- Music Production
- Physical Science
- Physics
- Political Science
- Social Sciences
- Surgical Technology
Appendix C
Communication
Appendix D

American Association of Higher Education (AAHE)

Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values. Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve. Educational values should drive not only what we choose to assess but also how we do so. Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what’s easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about.

2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time. Learning is a complex process. It entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but values, attitudes, and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom. Assessment should reflect these understandings by employing a diverse array of methods, including those that call for actual performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration. Such an approach aims for a more complete and accurate picture of learning, and therefore firmer bases for improving our students' educational experience.

3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes. Assessment is a goal-oriented process. It entails comparing educational performance with educational purposes and expectations -- those derived from the institution's mission, from faculty intentions in program and course design, and from knowledge of students' own goals. Where program purposes lack specificity or agreement, assessment as a process pushes a campus toward clarity about where to aim and what standards to apply; assessment also prompts attention to where and how program goals will be taught and learned. Clear, shared, implementable goals are the cornerstone for assessment that is focused and useful.

4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes. Information about outcomes is of high importance; where students "end up" matters greatly. But to improve outcomes, we need to know about student experience along the way -- about the curricula, teaching, and kind of student effort that lead to particular outcomes. Assessment can help us understand which students learn best under what conditions; with such knowledge comes the capacity to improve the whole of their learning.

5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic. Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative. Though isolated, "one-shot" assessment can be better than none, improvement is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of activities undertaken over time. This may mean tracking the process of individual students, or of cohorts of students; it may mean collecting the same examples of student performance or using the same instrument semester after semester. The point is to monitor progress toward intended goals in a spirit of continuous improvement. Along the way, the assessment process itself should be evaluated and refined in light of emerging insights.

6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved. Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility. Thus, while assessment efforts may start small, the aim over time is to involve people from across the educational community. Faculty play an especially important role, but assessment's questions can't be fully addressed without participation by student-affairs educators, librarians, administrators, and students. Assessment may also involve individuals from beyond the
campus (alumni/ae, trustees, employers) whose experience can enrich the sense of appropriate aims and standards for learning. Thus understood, assessment is not a task for small groups of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better-informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.

7. **Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.** Assessment recognizes the value of information in the process of improvement. But to be useful, information must be connected to issues or questions that people really care about. This implies assessment approaches that produce evidence that relevant parties will find credible, suggestive, and applicable to decisions that need to be made. It means thinking in advance about how the information will be used, and by whom. The point of assessment is not to gather data and return "results"; it is a process that starts with the questions of decision-makers, that involves them in the gathering and interpreting of data, and that informs and helps guide continuous improvement.

8. **Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.** Assessment alone changes little. Its greatest contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and worked at. On such campuses, the push to improve educational performance is a visible and primary goal of leadership; improving the quality of undergraduate education is central to the institution's planning, budgeting, and personnel decisions. On such campuses, information about learning outcomes is seen as an integral part of decision making, and avidly sought.

9. **Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.** There is a compelling public stake in education. As educators, we have a responsibility to the publics that support or depend on us to provide information about the ways in which our students meet goals and expectations. But that responsibility goes beyond the reporting of such information; our deeper obligation -- to ourselves, our students, and society -- is to improve. Those to whom educators are accountable have a corresponding obligation to support such attempts at improvement.

Authors: Alexander W. Astin; Trudy W. Banta; K. Patricia Cross; Elaine El-Khawas; Peter T. Ewell; Pat Hutchings; Theodore J. Marchese; Kay M. McClenny; Marcia Mentkowski; Margaret A. Miller; E. Thomas Moran; Barbara D. Wright. This document was developed under the auspices of the AAHE Assessment Forum with support from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education with additional support for publication and dissemination from the Exxon Education Foundation. Copies may be made without restriction.
Appendix E
Assessment Methods
There are a variety of assessment methods that can be used to measure student learning and departmental or program performance/outcome measures.

Direct and Indirect Measures
Direct measures are compelling evidence of department/program performance or what students have or have not learned (Suskie, 2009). It is tangible, visible, self-explanatory evidence (Suskie, 2004). Direct measures provide for the direct examination or observation of student knowledge or skills against measurable performance indicators (Rogers, 2016).

Examples of direct measures include:
- Service time
- Error rates
- Standardized exams
- Portfolios of student work
- Performance observations or written work that is scored with a rubric

Indirect measures are proxy signs that a department/program may be achieving its purpose (Suskie, 2009). They ascertain the opinion or self-report of the extent or value of learning experiences (Rogers, 2016). Indirect measures assess impressions or thoughts about knowledge, skills, attitudes, learning, experiences, etc. They are more subjective than direct measures.

Indirect measures can help explain results obtained from a direct assessment, as well as give insights on how customers, co-workers or students perceive aspects of our programs or processes. Indirect measures can also be entirely sufficient to measure some program/process outcomes.

Examples of indirect measures include:
- Student/faculty/employee surveys (self-reports of satisfaction, learning, etc.)
- Honors, awards, scholarships earned by departments, students or alumni
- Focus groups

Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches
Quantitative assessments involve predetermined response options that can be summarized into meaningful numbers and analyzed statistically (Suskie, 2009; Rogers, 2016). Examples include test scores, rubric scores or survey results (closed-ended, such as multiple choice or Likert scale questions).

Qualitative assessments use flexible, naturalistic methods and are usually analyzed by looking for recurring patterns and themes (Suskie, 2009; Rogers, 2016). Examples include open-ended questions on surveys, focus groups, interviews, and reflective writing.
**Selecting the Best Assessment Method**

All assessment methods have advantages and disadvantages. It is important to consider which method is the best fit between program needs, validity, and affordability (time, effort and money). Best practice would indicate that the use of multi-methods is advisable to maximize validity and reduce bias of any one approach. Having a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods can provide rich information that can be analyzed to decide what improvements are most warranted. (See the Evaluation Measures worksheet in the Appendix for examples of indicators of service/performance quality that may be relevant for assessing the effectiveness of your department’s major activities.)
Appendix F

Writing Student Learning and Program Learning Outcome Statements

Program or Objective Outcomes are goals that are based on the mission of the division or department. The assessment project can be structured to determine whether the department is effectively providing services or meeting the needs of its stakeholders. The assessment should be meaningful and designed to solve a problem or measure the effectiveness of a process, program or service in order to improve. Improvement is an important internal motivator that drives assessment efforts.

Here are some questions that might help you brainstorm a list of outcomes:

- What are our department’s objectives, based on the mission?
- What should our department or a particular student support program accomplish?
- What is the desired aggregate effect of a program, service or intervention?
- Are there industry standards or other guidelines that I can use to help evaluate my department or program effectiveness?

Student Learning Outcomes are goals that describe how a student will be different because of a learning experience. More specifically, learning outcomes are the knowledge, skills, attitudes and habits of mind students take with them from a learning experience (Suskie, 2009).

To understand how we might be impacting student learning, we must first define our student learning outcomes and then measure if the program/service implemented to facilitate the learning was effective.

It may be difficult to know where to start in writing a student learning outcome. Here are some questions that might help you brainstorm a list of outcomes:

- What do you want the students to be able to do?
- What knowledge, skill or abilities should the ideal student participants demonstrate?
- How will students be able to demonstrate what they learned?
- How does this program and outcome fit within the department or division’s mission?

Guidelines

The focus should be on what a student will be able to do with the information or experience. Once you have identified the intended outcome(s), you will want to write a formal learning outcome statement. Make sure the statement is SMART:

- **S** Specific (focused goals and the tasks required for their attainment)
- **M** Measurable (data/evidence can be collected to measure student learning)
- **A** Attainable (given program or experience)
- **R** Relevant (worthwhile and consistent with mission/strategic plan/ Gen Eds. or CAS standards)
- **T** Time-bound

Ask yourself if the learning outcomes follows the 3 Ms: manageable, measureable and meaningful.
**Parts of a SLO Statement**

There are three basic parts to a Student Learning Outcome (SLO) Statement:  

SLOs = Stakeholder + Result + Target/Criteria for Success  

1. Stakeholder – Who you want to impact (students in this instance)  
2. Result – What stakeholder (students) should know or be able to do  
3. Target/Criteria for Success – Measurable level of the outcome needed to deem program/service a success  

You may find it helpful to use the following statement as a guide to write your SLO:  

As a result of participating in (program or experience), students (stakeholders) should be able to (result using action verb) + (defined by explicit and observable criteria for success).  

*Ex: Following a series of budget development workshops in Fall of 2015, 70% (target/criteria for success) of financial aid recipients who attended the workshops (stakeholder) will develop effective budgets (result).*  

*Ex: After attending a sexual assault program, student participants (stakeholder) will be given a worksheet of 50 multiple-choice questions (tool) and will select the correct answers (result) for at least 85% of the problems (target/criteria for success).*  

References:  

- Austin & Underwood, Assessment-Nuts & Bolts, presented July 9, 2015  
- Culp & Dungy, Building a Culture of Evidence in Student Affairs, 2012  
- Schuh & Upcraft, Assessment Practice in Student Affairs, 2001
## Appendix G

### Example of a completed assessment plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prairie State College - Discipline Assessment Plan</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Course title(s)/number(s)** | § ENG 098 Foundations of College Writing  
| | § ENG 099 Strategies for College Reading and Writing  
| | § ENG 101 Composition 1  
| | § ENG 102 Composition 2 |
| **Sections to be assessed** | Semester  
| | Fall 2016  
| | Section(s)  
| | TBA  
| | Estimated enrollment  
| | TBA |
| **Faculty members participating** | TBA |
| **Faculty member submitting this plan** | Jessica Gravely and Megan Hughes |
| **Date submitted** | October 3, 2016 |

In two or so paragraphs, explain which student learning outcome(s) you want to assess and why. Please include the kinds of evidence you’ll look for to show what and how students are learning. The Assessment Council is made up of representatives from all areas of the College, including students, so please refrain from using discipline-specific or assessment jargon.

To some extent, the English department’s assessment project plan for 2016–17 has stemmed from conversations surrounding last year’s project. Our 2015–2016 assessment project focused solely on ENG 101; with that project we sought to determine the primary reasons students earn a score of “1” on the end-of-term portfolio (a failing score which results in an administrative withdrawal). Our data showed that, more than any other factor, issues with focus – as revealed by faculty scorers’ comments – were the most frequently noted problems in these students’ portfolios.

We are now interested in examining focus in student writing more broadly, as our project will span developmental and college-level composition, including ENG 098, ENG 099, ENG 101, and ENG 102. Our project will assess selected end-of-term writing for its competence with focus. We will ask faculty to submit writing from students who have given their permission to be involved in the project; we anticipate being able to draw from a wide variety of section types and formats.

Each of these courses contains an outcome that reflects focused writing as a desired goal, if in varied language and with slightly different emphases. We will assess end-of-term
writing with regard to the outcome that reads, “Develop a purpose, a controlling idea, and a thesis statement which clearly focus the writing.” (This is an ENG 101 course outcome.) We plan to use a Likert scale as our assessment tool; our results should offer some insight into how students are progressing in the composition sequence with regard to focus. Our rationale for applying this college-level 101 outcome to student writing at the developmental level is that our course sequence scaffolds students towards competence in the 101 outcomes. We are interested in what those levels of competence look like at the end of each course in the sequence and how student competence builds through the sequence. In order to develop a comprehensive picture of our composition program, we would like to assess 102 artifacts as well.

Please distill those two paragraphs into one research question:
How does students’ competence in producing focused writing change as they move through the sequence of English courses?

Is this a follow-up to a previous assessment?  
____ No  ____ X  ____ Yes

If so, how does this plan relate to the previous assessment's findings? What were the results? Given those results, what improvements are you implementing this year? How will you assess the effectiveness of these changes?  
Please see above.

How does your plan respond to the research about the student learning outcome(s)? What research or literature have you found that examines this learning outcome or assessment of this outcome? How does your review of others’ studies shape how you will assess this learning outcome?

Scholarship in Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies advocates for methods of assessment that reflect curricula, pedagogies, and values of writing programs (e.g., Yancey, 1999; Huot, 2002; Broad, 2003; Condon and Kelly-Riley, 2004; Adler-Kassner and O’Neill, 2010; Behm et al., 2013; Elliot et al., 2016). This attention to local contexts can help writing programs work toward valid, reliable, fair, and ethical methods of assessment that underscore improving teaching and learning.

If focus is the most frequently commented critique of failing students’ portfolios in English 101, it is our obligation to look more closely at how focus operates in student writing throughout the composition sequence.

What assessment artifacts/data will you use (e.g., problem set, quiz, presentation, portfolio, essay)? Why have you selected those artifacts/data? Address how you will gather evidence of how well students understand their own mastery of the student learning outcome. Please remember, the best assessments incorporate multiple measures (both direct and indirect) of examining student learning.
The artifacts we will use are end-of-semester essays that have received feedback and have undergone revision. These samples will offer students the most opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of the concept (rather than selecting an unrevise artifact, or one from earlier in the semester). Additionally, we will include indirect measures of assessment by administering student surveys in Spring semester composition classes, to determine students’ attitudes toward and understanding of focus in writing.

**How will you analyze the data?** Who will be involved in the analysis? English faculty will be invited to evaluate the student essays. We will develop a scale to determine students’ proficiency, and will apply the same scale to each artifact and each course.

**What is your measurable goal?** How do you know the curriculum is working? (Example: Seventy percent of students will score a 3 or better on a five-point evaluation rubric.)

Sixty percent of students will score 2 or better on a four-point scale. Our rationale is that the focus-related outcome from ENG 101 will be applied across all levels, and we anticipate students in ENG 098 and 099 will be developing their ability to focus their writing, while students in ENG 101 and 102 will be mastering their ability to do so.

**How will adjunct faculty be involved in this assessment?** Adjunct faculty will be invited to score essays, and essays will be selected from both their and full-time faculty classes.

**What kind of institutional support would help you complete your assessment?** For instance, Datatel reports on demographics or student histories; randomized student lists; or surveys.

We believe this process would be most rewarding if a combination of adjunct and tenure-line faculty were involved in the scoring of student essays. That way, it can serve as a professional development and community-building opportunity. Faculty can come together to discuss student writing and to continue discussing pedagogical strategies that improve student writing. Faculty will also be exposed to an array of writing from across the curriculum, which can help build awareness and can help improve our teaching. For instance, those who only teach developmental courses will benefit by reading student writing from college-level courses, and those who only teach college-level courses will gain a better understanding of the preparatory work students do before entering their classrooms. We may be exposed to new approaches, which can then be implemented in our classes.

We further believe this project would be most meaningful by analyzing a statistically significant sample. Doing so will provide us with important baseline information about our program; from here, we can review our curricula, pedagogies, and methods of evaluation. Additionally, using a statistically significant sample will create the possibility that our department could present or publish our findings, both for Prairie State College and for a broader scholarly community.
We anticipate this assessment project to be time- and labor-intensive. We will need to:
- Draft and distribute an informed consent form for students.
- Create a repository for student artifacts.
- Create a survey for students.
- Communicate with faculty to submit an artifact; follow up with them to ensure they have done so.
- Score the artifacts.
- Enter the scoring results into Excel.
- Enter the survey results into Excel.
- Analyze data.
- Communicate results.

To create a meaningful professional development experience for faculty, we plan to hold several scoring sessions of four hours each. That way, we can offer training at the beginning of each day and after breaks, discuss the trends faculty observe, and build community together.

This project will require various types of institutional support. We will need randomized lists for sections and students, as well as assistance creating appropriate and effective surveys. Finally, we believe faculty who participate in the scoring process should receive remuneration.

Please indicate and describe which general education outcome(s) this project addresses.

_ X ___ Communication  ___ Information Literacy

___ Cultural Understanding  ___ Problem Solving

___ Creative Thinking

"describe" is a new addition; that will help us define how our programs and disciplines reinforce each other across campus.

By analyzing the focus of students’ writing, we are clearly addressing the general education outcome of Communication (since writing is a form of communication).
Appendix H
Example of a completed assessment report

PSC Assessment Council

Prairie State College - Assessment REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course title(s)/number(s)</th>
<th>Foundations For Algebra (Math 085)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Sections that were assessed</td>
<td>Semester</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FA 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty members participating</td>
<td>C. O’Connor, S. Ecsi, S. Talton, Y. Tsang, T. Warner, all full time faculty members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty member submitting this report</td>
<td>Kate Sims-Drew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date submitted</td>
<td>3/9/18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What student learning outcome did you assess?

1. Perform operations on whole numbers, integers, rational numbers, and decimals.

2. Solve equations involving whole numbers, integers, rational numbers, and decimals.

4. Simplify and/or evaluate expressions using the order of operations and/or combining like terms

In addition to the course objectives on the official course outline, the Math department also maintains a more detailed list of course objectives on our course website. The course objectives from that list which we will be evaluating are:

1. Use the rules of signed number arithmetic to perform operations on integers. These operations include, but are not limited to, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, exponentiation (raising numbers to powers), negation (finding additive inverses or opposites), ordering, and evaluating absolute values

2. Translate words or problem situations to algebraic expressions.

4. Solve one or two-step linear equations involving integers and fractions.

6. Find multiples and factors of numbers. Find the least common multiple (LCM) and the greatest common factor (GCF) of two or three numbers.
15. Evaluate algebraic expressions given specific values for the variables. [Problems may involve using the order of operations.]

16. Use the order of operations to simplify arithmetic expressions. The expressions may involve integers, fractions, or decimal numbers.

17. Collect and combine like terms to simplify algebraic expressions. The coefficients in the expressions may be integers, fractions, or decimal numbers.

What was your research question?

Will the curriculum changes made to Math 085 result in our students gaining better pre-Algebra skills?

Our goal was that the average improvement from the 1st to 16th week on our assessment would be greater than it was last semester (before we made changes to the course content).

What were the results of your assessment?

How did you analyze the data that you collected?

How close were you to achieving your measurable goal?

How were online sections involved?

How effective was the assessment method you used?

Briefly, how do you answer your research question now, after this assessment?

As in previous years, we found the difference between the week 1 and week 16 scores for all students who took both, then found the average of this improvement across all students.

We did not achieve our goal of increasing improvement on the assessment from week 1 to week 16. The difference in the results over the last three assessment cycles would almost certainly not be statistically significant. Below shows the improvements over the three times that we have done this assessment:

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Avg improvement</th>
<th>Avg improvement (passing students)</th>
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<td>Spring 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 2017</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.53</td>
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</table>
How will you use the results?

How and with whom (adjunct faculty, students, etc.) will you share the results?

What *specific* changes will you make to curriculum and/or teaching to improve student learning? Will the results of the assessment affect the department’s budget? If yes, how so?

If this was a follow-up to a previous assessment, how do the results of this year’s project relate to previous assessments?

How will this assessment inform your next assessment? (Will your next assessment repeat, alter or replace the assessment you did this time?)

What might your next research question be, based off the results of this report?

Clearly, our changes to emphasize pre-Algebra skills in Math 085 were not significant enough to cause improvement in our students’ skills. Although we have changed the title and the focus of our class, students still seem to be spending too much time on computational skills instead of the skills they will need to succeed in Elementary Algebra or Mathematical Literacy.

We probably need to look at the amount of time typically spent on each topic—with the new emphasis on the calculator, were instructors able to spend less time on mixed numbers and more time on pre-Algebra concepts? Or did the extra time get eaten up by something else, with no benefit to the pre-Algebra concepts that needed more attention? Perhaps we should even revise our sample syllabus to emphasize time spent on pre-Algebra concepts. We could also do a poll of Math 085 instructors to determine what changes they made in Fall 2017 after we had the meeting about implementing the calculator and emphasizing pre-Algebra in the course.

It’s also possible that the students didn’t have enough time on the assessment and/or did not take it seriously. If we decided to do the assessment again, we could allocate more than 10 minutes. Also, instead of doing the week 16 assessment as a separate activity, those questions could be integrated into the final exam so that students would, presumably, prepare ahead of time.

These results will be shared with all Math faculty and also posted on the Math department website.

Did you receive adequate institutional support?

Yes. The only support we needed was from ITR—we needed them to run the scantrons so that we could analyze the data.
Appendix 1

Math 085 Assessment

The following is an assessment of the Algebra readiness of students enrolled in Math 085. You have 10 minutes to complete the problems.

On your scantron, please make sure to bubble:

- Your first and last name
- Your course and section under “Course Code” (Ex: Math 085-03 is “08503”)
- Your ID (if you do not know your ID, you can ask your instructor to look it up in Web Advisor)

For #1 – 9 select the single best answer from the given choices for each question and mark your answer on your scantron sheet.

1. For the equation $5x - 2 = 15$, which of the following steps would correctly solve for $x$?
   a. Subtract 2 from both sides, then divide both sides by 5
   b. Add 2 to both sides, then divide both sides by 5
   c. Divide both sides by 5, then add 2 to both sides
   d. Divide both sides by 5, then subtract 2 from both sides
   e. None of the above

2. Which of the following is the GCF (greatest common factor) of 15 and 20?
   a. 5
   b. 10
   c. 60
   d. 300
   e. None of the above
3. Evaluate $b^2 - 4ac$ for $a = 2, b = 3, c = -1$
   
   a. -2
   
   b. 1
   
   c. 14
   
   d. 17
   
   e. None of the above

4. Which of the following is the LCM (least common multiple) of 6 and 8?

   a. 2
   
   b. 8
   
   c. 24
   
   d. 48
   
   e. None of the above

5. Combine like terms: $5a + 6 + 9b - 2b + a$

   a. $13ab + 6$
   
   b. $19ab$
   
   c. $6a + 7b + 6$
   
   d. $5a^2 + 7b^2 + 6$
   
   e. None of the above
6. Which of the following is a solution to the equation \( \frac{x}{4} + 1 = 8 \)?
   a. \( x = 3 \)
   b. \( x = 8 \)
   c. \( x = 32 \)
   d. \( x = 36 \)
   e. None of the above

7. Which of the following is a correct translation of the phrase “two-fifths of \( x \)?”?
   a. \( \frac{2}{5} + x \)
   b. \( \frac{2x}{5} \)
   c. \( \frac{2}{x} \)
   d. Both b and c
   e. None of the above

8. Combine like terms: \( 7 + 2x^2 + 5x + x^3 \)
   a. \( 15x^3 \)
   b. \( 8x^3 + 7 \)
   c. \( 8x^2 + 7 \)
   d. \( 3x^2 + 5x + 7 \)
   e. None of the above
9. Which equation(s) means the same as "7 is 5 less than a number"?

   Equation 1: $7 = n - 5$
   Equation 2: $7 = 5 - n$
   Equation 3: $n - 5 = 7$

   a. Equation 1 only
   b. Equation 2 only
   c. Equation 3 only
   d. Equations 1 and 2
   e. Equations 1 and 3

Problem #10 is a free-response problem. Please write your answers in the provided boxes.

10. Find 2 numbers that multiply together to equal -20. These same 2 numbers must also add together to equal -1. Put one number in each of the boxes below.

   [Boxes for answers]
Appendix II

16th week results: % who chose each answer

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<th>Problem</th>
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Progression from 1st week to 16th week (all students who took both assessments):

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