

John A. Logan College

Assessment Handbook

2007 - 2013

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Assessment Handbook

Introduction

This handbook has been developed as a reference tool for John A. Logan administrators, faculty, and staff members responsible for conducting and/or coordinating assessment activities in their departments. General assessment information is provided as well as an assessment schedule for each student learning goal, and examples of completed assessment forms. In addition, frequently asked questions and common misconceptions regarding assessment are addressed. Finally, a list of resources is provided.

Assessment Website: under construction

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Education Goals

The faculty and staff of John A. Logan College are committed to providing students with opportunities to develop learning abilities that will last a lifetime. Graduates will be prepared to succeed in their personal and professional lives because of achieved competence in the following general education goals:

- **Communication.** To participate in the entire communication process of listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- **Mathematical Reasoning.** To develop mathematical reasoning and an ability to apply quantitative methods.
- **Wellness.** To achieve physical and psychological wellness by learning to take responsibility for personal well-being.
- **Community Responsibility.** To become a responsible member of local, national and global communities by recognizing the values of diverse histories, economies and cultures.
- **Critical Thinking.** To cultivate the process of critical thinking by analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating objects, concepts, theories and hypotheses.
- **Workplace Readiness.** To accomplish workplace readiness by acquiring competencies and technological application skills related to chosen careers.
- **Ethical Awareness.** To develop an ethical awareness which focuses on the value of integrity, honesty and personal responsibility.
- **Aesthetic Response.** To develop an aesthetic appreciation of life through creative, artistic and cultural experiences.

Fundamentals of Assessment

The goal of assessment is to improve student learning. Assessment also helps the college fulfill its mission; by assessing what students have gained in terms of the institution's learning goals, administrators, faculty, and staff members can monitor the quality of the education provided and strive for constant improvement of that education.

The basic principles of effective assessment include the following:

- A. Faculty should have primary responsibility for developing, implementing, and maintaining assessment activities.
- B. Clearly defined learning outcomes are essential.
- C. Assessment is ongoing, systematic, and cyclical.
- D. Assessment should be logical, attainable, and consistent with the institution's mission.

The process is relatively simple.

1. Identify in general terms what educational goals are valued (institution and program mission statements should be used).
2. Determine where (in courses and outside of courses) these goals are addressed.
3. Write measurable objectives (learning outcomes) relevant to the goals.
4. Determine criteria for success (pretest/posttest, % accuracy, etc.).
5. Administer assessment activity.
6. Document, analyze, and communicate assessment findings.
7. Use findings to make curricular and instructional changes when necessary.
8. Reevaluate the assessment process with the intent to continuously improve the quality of student learning.

Assessment Cycle

Beginning Fall 08, the John A. Logan assessment cycle will include two of the eight learning goals per semester. The cycle will consist of five steps. *(Some learning goals will not be applicable to certain programs or departments. Only those goals that apply need to be assessed.)*

1. Submit a plan for assessing the goal.
2. Implement the plan.
3. Analyze the data.
4. Submit a report of the findings.
5. Implement any necessary changes the following semester.

| Goal to be Assessed | Plan Due Date | Report Due Date |
|----------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| <u>Fall 08</u> | | |
| Communication | June 1, 2008 | June 1, 2009 |
| Mathematical Reasoning | June 1, 2008 | June 1, 2009 |
| <u>Spring 09</u> | | |
| Wellness | October 1, 2008 | October 1, 2009 |
| Community Responsibility | October 1, 2008 | October 1, 2009 |
| <u>Fall 09</u> | | |
| Critical Thinking | June 1, 2009 | June 1, 2010 |
| Workplace Readiness | June 1, 2009 | June 1, 2010 |
| <u>Spring 10</u> | | |
| Ethical Awareness | October 1, 2009 | October 1, 2010 |
| Aesthetic Response | October 1, 2009 | October 1, 2010 |

Assessment Form

Program/Department/Division:

Department Chair:

Semester:

College Mission: *We are a diverse learning and teaching community committed to improving individual life and society through high quality, accessible educational programs and engaged learning opportunities.*

Program/Department/Division Mission Statement:

I. Assessment Plan

Learning Goal:

Intended Learning Outcomes:

List what students will be able to do (in relation to the above learning goal) upon successful completion of this course.

Lead Instructor:

The lead instructor's role is to communicate the plan to all faculty members involved and to coordinate implementation of the plan and analysis of results. (If there is more than one learning outcome to be assessed, there may be more than one lead instructor.)

The Plan:

What?

Describe the performance or task to be measured. (This could be an essay, a question or questions on an exam, a lab assignment, a project, etc.)

Why?

State the rationale for choosing this particular process for this particular goal.

How?

Explain how the results will be measured. (This could be a rubric, a checklist, or any other standard of measurement.)

When? *State the target date for collecting the data. (Most likely this will be by the end of the semester during which the plan is implemented.)*

Who? *Identify who will review the results. (This will probably be the lead instructor, the department chair, and other faculty.)*

Remember: Since accurate assessment measures the achievement of only those students who have successfully completed the course or program, only include those students when collecting your data.

Criteria for Success: *Establish a benchmark to determine success. (One way is to establish a percentage of students who meet the outcome to an acceptable level, which should be listed here as well.)*

II. Assessment Results

What were the results? *After the data has been collected and analyzed, list the quantifiable results in relation to the benchmark used to determine success.*

What was learned? *Describe what was learned from the above results. For instance, could certain changes (such as textbook selection, better communication among faculty, greater emphasis on certain concepts, or upgrading equipment) lead to future improvements in student learning?*

III. Action Plan *Explain how the assessment results will be used to improve student learning.*

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Learning Goal:

Intended Learning Outcomes:

Lead Instructor:

The Plan:

What?

Why?

How?

When?

Who?

Criteria for Success:

II. Assessment Results

What were the results?

What was learned?

III. Action Plan

Assessment Form Checklist

| Section | Criteria for Evaluation | Y | N | Notes |
|---|--|---|---|-------|
| Top | Is all of the basic information listed and correct? | | | |
| Mission | Do the learning outcomes reflect the mission? | | | |
| Intended Student Learning Outcomes | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are the outcomes clearly defined? 2. Are they measurable? | | | |
| Lead Instructor(s) | Is it clear who will lead the assessment process for each outcome listed? | | | |
| Process | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the rationale for selecting this process clearly stated? 2. Is it clear what performance or task will be used to measure student learning? 3. Will the process lead to results that are measurable and evaluated uniformly against a designated standard? 4. Are the target dates listed and appropriate? 5. Is it clear who will analyze the results? | | | |
| Criteria for Success | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are the benchmarks realistic? 2. Would meeting or exceeding the benchmarks indicate program/course success? 3. Were only those students who successfully completed the program or course used in results? | | | |
| Summary of Results and Analysis of Data | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are the listed results quantifiable? 2. Is it clear what was learned from this assessment process? | | | |
| Action Plan | Is it clear what steps will be taken to improve student learning? | | | |

Example Assessment Form

Program/Department/Division: Social Science – PSC 131 American Government

Department Chair: Perry Knop

Semester: FY 06 - 07

College Mission: *We are a diverse learning and teaching community committed to improving individual life and society through high quality, accessible educational programs and engaged learning opportunities.*

Program/Department/Division Mission Statement:

J. Assessment Plan

Learning Goal: Mathematical Reasoning

Intended Learning Outcomes: Students will be able to accurately answer questions about voter turnout in US elections and statistical accuracy of opinion polls. We expect students who completed PSC 131 will improve their post test scores as compared to pre test scores on these two questions.

Lead Instructors: Jane Bryant and Perry Knop

The Plan:

What? Two multiple choice assessment questions

Why? The pre test provides a point of reference of prior student knowledge of these two items and allows professors to judge the difference in mean scores of the post/pre test on these two questions related to mathematical reasoning.

How? The results will be measured by comparing the mean percentage of correct responses on the pre test score to the mean percentage of correct responses on the post test score. A paired sample t test will verify the change in learning from the beginning of the semester. The statistical significance level is set at $p > .05$.

When? The assessment tool is administered during the first week of instruction and during the last week of instruction. This results of the assessment are in no way used to calculate the students' grades.

Who? The lead instructors will review the results.

Criteria for Success: The lead instructors would like to see the post test score on each item be at least 75% (an average grade in the course). However, it is more important to see a statistically significant increase in student learning on the item as opposed to an arbitrary percentage.

II. Assessment Results

What were the results?

During FY 06 – 07, student learning in PSC 131 did improve in regard to Mathematical Reasoning on one of the questions, but not the other.

Q1 asked students to identify the election with the largest turnout. The mean percentage score on the pre test was 88%, but the mean percentage score on the post test was 83%. Therefore, there was a 5% decrease in the mean percentage score from the beginning of the semester as compared to the end. However, upon statistical analysis of a paired sample t-test, the difference in percentage is not statistically significant.

Q2 asked students to identify how the accuracy of an opinion poll is determined. The mean percentage score on the pre test was 66%, but the mean percentage score on the post test was 80%. Therefore, there was a 14% increase in the percentage score from the beginning of the semester as compared to the end. Upon statistical analysis of a paired sample t-test, the difference in percentage is statistically significant ($p > .01$).

What was learned? Students in PSC 131 know more about voter turnout than public opinion research as they relate to mathematical reasoning upon entering the course. Incidentally, students in PSC 131

know more about voter turnout than public opinion research as they relate to mathematical reasoning upon exiting the course.

While there was a slight *decrease* in the mean percentage score on the voter turnout question, it should be noted the difference in scores was not statistically significant. Yet, the researchers are concerned that no improvement in student learning occurred in this area.

There was a statistically significant improvement of student learning on the second question.

III. Action Plan

Improved communication regarding voter turnout will assist in improving student learning on this question.

The instructors are pleased with the results on the second question, but will try to build upon this success through better communication of the fundamentals of public opinion research.

Based upon these findings, the instructors are not convinced that assessing mathematical reasoning is best served by the use of these two questions. Thus, consideration will be given to changing the questions or choosing a better method for assessing mathematical reasoning in PSC 131.

Frequently Asked Questions

(Questions in quotation marks were asked by JALC faculty/staff at the workshop held during the fall Faculty and Staff Development Day.)

1. What is assessment?

Assessment is the collection and interpretation of information about what, how much, and how well students are learning.

Assessment is *not*...

- a part of faculty evaluation.
- an intrusion on faculty members' classrooms nor academic freedom.

2. How does assessment help faculty/staff?

- Faculty can increase their awareness of student learning.
- Adjustments to teaching strategies can be made to address gaps in learning.
- Faculty can better identify what to teach, including sequencing of discipline-specific knowledge and skills.
- Section-to-section consistency can be improved.
- Structure is provided for co-curricular programs.

3. Won't assessment take a lot of extra time? "Will we have time allotted to work on this, or is it coming out of our already very busy schedules?"

In the beginning assessment activities may require some extra effort and time. However, most faculty are already doing assessment, they simply need to formalize the procedure and provide documentation of what they do. In addition, the benefits of assessment could actually save time in the long run if faculty use the results to make changes that improve efficiency in the classroom. Furthermore, the process will slowly become second nature and no longer "extra" work. Finally, much of the work involved will be done during workshops held during faculty/staff development days.

4. Will assessment information be "authentic," or "Are we doing this just to fill out forms to be filed away?"

The goal is most definitely to use the information to “close the loop” and make improvements in student learning. However, much of that is up to the faculty; they are the ones that must decide to make whatever changes are revealed as necessary by the data.

5. “Will the administration actually follow through with implementing your suggestions and ideas for assessment?”

To this point, administration at John A. Logan College has been very supportive of assessment, as indicated by funding for travel and other resources as needed. In addition, as indicated in the answer to question four, time at faculty and staff development day has been allocated to working on assessment. Finally, as also indicated in question four’s answer, the real follow through with assessment is up to faculty and staff and what they do in their classrooms and offices.

6. “Will the assessment initiative address our services for the community or only for students/students learning?”

Although assessment began with the instructional level, we are currently working on incorporating its use in all divisions of the college, so yes, it will eventually address our services for the community as well.

7. “Will we be provided with resources (books, websites, articles, workshops, conferences) to start and continue to improve our assessment processes?”

Absolutely! In fact, some of these are listed in the back of this handbook under “Resources” and can be found in our library.

8. How does assessment benefit students?

An immediate benefit for students is that faculty expectations of them are clarified. In addition, the lines of communication and feedback between faculty and students are improved. Finally, students will learn more and be better prepared to compete in the job market or at four-year institutions.

9. How does assessment benefit the college?

Assessment has already helped the college with accreditation and applications for grants and other funding sources.

10. How does assessment benefit the community?

Because of the increased funding that assessment data can help the college obtain, the community will benefit by having a better facility. In addition, because assessment will improve learning, graduates will be better qualified when they enter the community's workforce.

Resources

John A. Logan College Assessment Website:

Books available in our library:

Assessing for Learning: Building a Sustainable Commitment Across the Institution

Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide

Assessment Case Studies: Common Issues in Implementation with Various Campus Approaches to Resolution

Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers

Collaborative Analysis of Student Work

The Department Head's Guide to Assessment Implementation in Administrative and Educational Support Units

Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility

Learning and Teaching: Research-based Methods

The Mapping Primer: Tools for Reconstructing the College Curriculum

Moving into Town – and Moving On: The Community College in the Lives of Traditional-age Students

The Outcomes Primer: Reconstructing the College Curriculum

A Practitioner's Handbook for Institutional Effectiveness and Student Outcomes Assessment Implementation

Thinking about Teaching and Learning: Developing Habits of Learning with First Year College and University Students

Helpful websites:

Glossaries of assessment terms you may encounter:

<http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/assess/terminology.htm>

<http://www.sabes.org/assessment/glossary.htm>

<http://www.fetaweb.com/06/glossary.assessment.htm>

<http://artswork.asu.edu/arts/teachers/assessment/glossary.htm>

Other sites containing helpful information:

<http://www.ecs.org/html/issue.asp?issueID=12>

<http://www.idea.ksu.edu/StudentRatings/index.html>

<http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm>

Sources used in the design of this handbook include the following:

Cochise College. *Program/Discipline Assessment Handbook*, 2006.

Nichols, J. O., and Nichols, K.W., *The Department Head's Guide to Assessment Implementation in Educational and Academic Support Units*, Agathon Press, 2000.

Schuh, J. H., and Upcraft, M. L., *Assessment Practice in Student Affairs: An Applications Manual*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001.

Upcraft, M. L., and Schuh, J. H., *Assessment in Student Affairs: A Guide for Practitioners*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996.

<http://oregonstate.edu/studentaffairs/assessment/educationaltraining.html>

<http://www.vpsa.txstate.edu/programs-and-services/planning-and-assessment.html>