

Harold Washington College Departmental Assessment Pilot - Fall 2012

Harold Washington College (HWC) has secured considerable additional funding from District to pilot and establish coherent, successful and sustainable assessment of student learning at the departmental level. HWC has a strong institutional assessment culture in which the college-wide assessment of general education student learning outcomes is well-established.

The new resources are designed to build on this faculty-led assessment culture and expertise to allow selected departments to begin to establish legitimate units of assessment, student learning outcomes, assessment metrics and processes, data management and dissemination processes. All of this activity seeks to support faculty through the use of department level relevant data from which both student learning outcomes and student success can be improved. The longer term goal is to cumulatively add departments to this process until we have all departments regularly assessing student learning outcomes, at levels beyond the individual classroom unit, as students build towards a coherent college award.

These new departmental initiatives should be faculty-led and work in partnership with the institutional expertise in assessment that HWC already has. Departments should see this pilot as the initiation of support for important practices that will have increasing resonance in our re-accreditation process. This is also seen as a vehicle for expanded faculty engagement in assessment practices that can directly impact teaching and learning. Learning from each department will be shared amongst those participating and within the College-wide Assessment Committee, so that our institutional assessment knowledge grows alongside impactful practice changes. District has high regard for HWC's assessment work, as seen by the support for this expansion, and this new work will certainly be watched closely at District for lessons that can be utilized beyond HWC.

Implementation

In partnership with the Assessment Committee and the Dean of Instruction a small group of initial departments will lead the pilot. A faculty member from each of these departments will act as Department Assessment Liaison who will be a key player in the pilot on behalf of their department.

Department Assessment Liaisons will work within their own department structure and culture to deliver on a range of outcomes. They are also expected to contribute to the building of our departmental assessment knowledge as we expand and deepen our assessment practices across the campus.

The first task must be to establish appropriate, educationally coherent and manageable, units of assessment. This must be beyond one class level and could be a sequence of courses, a capstone experience, at the summative point in a concentration, or any other level that would inform practice within a department or specific discipline. Multi-discipline departments will need to decide if there are over-arching or under-pinning student learning outcomes that transcend disciplinary boundaries or whether they will need discreet assessments for each or some of their contributory disciplines.

Once the unit of assessment has been established, specific, measurable student learning outcomes must be formulated and agreed. These outcomes should then guide the process for finding an appropriate assessment tool. Assessment tools can be acquired from other HE institutions, adapted from a range of sources, or created by department faculty themselves. They should assess our specific student learning outcomes, be appropriate in level and accessibility for our students. They should also be brief and collect only data relevant to their key departmental tasks. If there are ways to embed the assessment process within current assessment activities, then these should be encouraged.

Department Liaisons will be encouraged to make this process as inclusive and collegial as possible but also be guided by the need to deliver on the outcomes attached to these additional resources. It is expected that by the end of the fall semester units of assessment and student learning outcomes will have been agreed and codified. Also by the end of fall semester, the assessment tool investigation should have made strong progress, the data gathering process and procedures should have been outlined for a full departmental assessment to occur early in the spring semester of 2013. Ideally, a small pilot should have occurred before the end of the fall semester 2012.

Department Liaisons will work alongside the Assessment Committee and specifically report to the Department Assessment Coordinator as a key point of contact, feedback and advice. At this stage in the pilot it would be good if Department Assessment Liaisons could attend regular Wednesday Assessment Committee meetings. At this stage in the pilot, they will form a specific sub-committee of the larger Assessment Committee and Departmental Assessment will run in parallel with our more usual general education assessment program. As the scale and scope of Departmental Assessment increases, different coordination and organization strategies may replace these initial pilot structures.

In spring of 2013, participating Departments are expected to run a full assessment and gather appropriate data from as many students as possible. Also during spring 2013 it is expected that data gathered are processed, analyzed and their meaning communicated within the department. An expectation would be that recommendations for any evidence-based changes that are within the department or HWC domain could be implemented in the fall semester of

2013. Additional research support services will also be used to support the data processing and analysis stages of this new assessment cycle.

Department Assessment Pilot: Tasks and Timescales

Timespan	Key Tasks	Required Outcome
August 2012 – September 2012	Establish coherent unit or units of assessment.	Map of Departmental Units of Assessment.
October 2012	Formulate specific Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for associated units of assessment.	Written, agreed SLOs for appropriate units of assessment.
October 2012 – November 2012	Research, adapt or create appropriate tools and metrics.	Draft assessment tool for review.
October 2012 – November 2012	Outline assessment process and how faculty and students contribute to the assessment process.	Plan of engagement and data gathering strategy for full assessment.
October 2012 – November 2012	Run small pilot to test tool and assessment process.	Small student sample and completed data set.
November 2012 – December 2012	Use pilot learning to adapt tool and assessment process.	Finalized assessment tool, full assessment process plan produced.
January 2013 – February 2013	Create full assessment process, procedures and data gathering strategies for full assessment.	Produce all communications, recruitment materials for full assessment.
March 2013	Maximize faculty and student involvement in department assessment.	Conduct assessment: gather full data set on specific outcomes from relevant sample students.
March 2013 – April 2013	Process and analyze collected data. Work with Assessment colleagues and Institutional Research to produce operational findings.	Review implementation findings, assist in data processing queries where needed.
April 2013 - May 2013	Disseminate findings, create dialogue in department and beyond, to improve student learning outcomes.	Create department materials using findings. Table discussions on practice changes.
May 2013	Use outcome findings and methodological learning from full process to design improved assessment process for second iteration.	Report to Assessment Committee about next assessment for Department.

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