

# Assessment Committee Charge

*Approved April 2022*

## HWC Mission & Assessment

Harold Washington College (HWC) is a student-centered institution that empowers all members of its community through accessible and affordable academic advancement, career development and personal enrichment.

To fulfill this mission, Harold Washington College focuses on our core values, one of which states, “We assess to improve learning.” HWC is, thus, committed to maintaining a campus culture focused on learning in which faculty, students, and administration share a common understanding of the meaning, purpose, and utility of student learning assessment.

## HWC Assessment Committee Charge

The Harold Washington College Assessment Committee (HWCAC) is dedicated to fulfilling the HWC core value of conducting assessment activities to improve student learning. The HWCAC is dedicated to advancing equity through the questions we ask about student learning, the tools we build to assess student learning across the college, and by disaggregating data to look for achievement gaps that may inform the committee’s recommendations as well as future student learning assessments.

The HWCAC maintains cycles of assessment focused on various units of student learning, including at the institutional, general education, cocurricular, and program levels, in order to collect, analyze, and disseminate relevant student learning data. We plan, execute, and support the student learning assessment activities within these various units. The HWCAC shares our findings from these assessments with the larger HWC community, and we offer recommendations to faculty, staff, and administration aimed at the improvement of student learning. The HWCAC values voluntary participation in assessment activities and does not participate in evaluation of faculty. Our focus is on understanding and improving student learning.

## HWCAC Outcomes

By the end of each academic year, the AC will:

- Write/revise/maintain student learning outcomes within larger units of assessment (including Institutional and General Education), and assess student learning outcomes within these units.
- Coordinate and support smaller area-specific units of student learning assessment within departments via Departmental Assessment Liaisons and the Coordinator of Cocurricular Assessment.
- Research proprietary assessment tools and/or design assessment tools to assess student learning outcomes within these various units.
- Analyze assessment data, including disaggregating data to identify achievement gaps and advance equity.
- Make recommendations based on assessment findings.
- Communicate assessment activities, findings, and recommendations through a variety of methods: newsletter, website, reports, briefs, brochures, presentations, and/or other strategies.
- Review Assessment Committee core documents including the charge, handbook, and assessment calendar, and revise as needed.

## HWC Common Definition of Assessment

HWC characterizes assessment of student learning as a comprehensive, faculty-driven process that is ongoing, systematic, structured, and sustainable, as well as fun. We recognize that for the committee to be successful in this endeavor, there must be meaningful input from students and strong support from the administration. Also, we have snacks.\*

*\*at least, when we get to meet in person, we do.*

Student learning is examined from various units of study, which include any grouping beyond a single classroom, such as degree or certificate programs; or series of courses within or across the disciplines. The process of assessment may include focus on curricular or cocurricular activities.

To be effective, any assessment process requires:

- Establishing faculty expectations for student learning outcomes that are explicitly and publicly stated and that set standards for the quality of the learning experience as well as its outcomes.
- Maintaining a clear and firm distinction between assessment of student learning (which is the mission of this committee) and evaluation of faculty (which is a completely separate process dictated by union contracts and which is beyond the purview of this committee).
- Preserving the committee commitment to exclusively voluntary participation

- Nurturing an assessment culture that is faculty-led and administratively-supported, with diverse committee representation including students, staff, administrators, and faculty..
- Aligning assessment activities, methods, and instruments with the learning outcomes expected by the faculty.
- Gathering, analyzing and interpreting student learning outcomes data..
- Using assessment information from both direct and indirect measures:
  - To examine assumptions about learning.
  - To explore how, when, and where learning takes place.
  - To disaggregate data and identify in what areas, and for which students, learning needs to be improved.
  - To encourage efforts to make changes in modes of instruction, program curricula, learning resources, and support services designed to improve student learning.
  - To create and sustain an institutional culture in which it is the college's priority to assure and improve the quality of education each academic program promises and offers.

## HWCAC Processes

The HWC Assessment Committee uses two different assessment processes—one set of practices associated with General Assessment, and another associated with Area-Specific Assessment.

### General Assessment Process

The general assessment process has four stages and is used to assess the institutional learning outcomes.

***Stage 1 – Inquiry:*** This is a questioning phase (also known as the “Query Project”) in which committee members pose one or more questions, determined by the committee, to students, faculty, staff, and/or administrators. The committee will conduct a new query project within three academic years of the previous.

***Stage 2 – Selection:*** Committee members review the responses, generating initial findings and identifying priority issues and concerns regarding student learning.

***Stage 3 – Exploration:*** Committee members identify links between initial, selected concerns identified in Stage 2 and Institution-level objectives and learning outcomes; they then obtain,

seek, and consider existing data sets, or find, create, and deploy appropriate measures to create new ones, in order to better understand student learning (in a general context, across the college) in connection with the selected concerns. Recent assessments have involved use of national assessment tools, customized adapted tools, and our own innovative assessment tools created from scratch. In cases requiring new assessments, the committee remains cognizant that successful assessment requires buy-in and active contributions from many stakeholders. We are conscious of achieving a significant sample size and one which mirrors the diversity of our student body. Committee members recruit faculty and sections, ensure sample size, and conduct the assessment process in formats that are accessible to all our students. Assessment data is codified and input, reliability and validity checks are undertaken, and the committee produces analyzed and usable data. This data analysis process also includes a review of our methodology.

***Stage 4 – Evidence-Based Action:*** Committee members develop an interpretation of available and collected data--including data drawn from assessments of institution-level objectives and outcomes, program and unit level assessments, data from the Office of Institutional Research, publicly available data, and other sources, as appropriate. Committee members create communication tools and partner with other stakeholders to conduct discussions regarding the findings and committee recommendations in light of the assessment, all in order to develop and support responses aimed at improving student learning.

## Area-Specific Assessment Program

The committee and its members use a 6-stage assessment process for area-specific assessment activities (e.g. program, unit, cocurricular):

***Stage 1 – Outcome Definition:*** Committee members formulate and approve specific student learning outcomes. This is often done in consultation with key faculty in the discipline area. The student learning outcomes form the foundation of our assessment work. These remain fixed for a full cycle of the assessment process and then are open for change as we restart assessment on specific outcomes in the light of our learning.

***Stage 2 – Assessment Research and Design:*** The Assessment Committee uses a sub-committee structure to maximize our expertise in researching and designing a specific methodology for each student learning outcome. In this stage we find, create or review appropriate tools and processes for our specific outcomes and diverse urban context. Recent assessments have involved use of national assessment tools, customizing existing tools and creating from scratch our own innovative assessment tools.

**Stage 3 - Pilot Assessment Tools and Processes:** Faculty and a small number of student sections are used to pilot any assessment tool and process, so that when the full assessment is used we have minimized potential errors and anticipated logistical and methodological challenges.

**Stage 4 – Administer Specific Assessment:** A successful assessment requires buy-in and active contributions from many stakeholders. We are conscious of achieving a significant sample size and one which mirrors the diversity of our student body. Committee members recruit faculty and sections, ensure sample size, and conduct the assessment process in formats that are accessible to all our students.

**Stage 5 – Data Analysis:** Assessment data is codified and input, reliability and validity checks are undertaken, and the committee produces analyzed and usable data. This data analysis process also includes a review of our methodology. Discussions among all the stakeholders and interested parties take place regarding the findings and potential recommendations of the assessment.

**Stage 6 – Supporting Evidence-Based Change:** Committee members partner with other stakeholders to present findings and to recommend change. A broad range of techniques are used to disseminate findings and encourage dialogue about improving student learning. This stage also includes a review of the specific student learning outcomes under investigation and the restarting of the assessment process by returning to Stage 1.

## HWCAC Membership and Roles

The AC is a faculty-led team of interdisciplinary faculty, staff, administrators, and students that meets weekly, excluding weeks 1 and 16 of the term, to fulfill its charge. The committee's executive team maintains communication with and is supported by the Office of Instruction, but the committee's structure and activities are determined by the committee members.

### HWC Assessment Committee Membership

Any and all interested members of the HWC or CCC community are invited and welcome to join the committee as either members or meeting attendees (ongoing or occasional). The committee welcomes anyone interested in the work of the committee, in assessment, and in the college to join us as an observer or contributor for a meeting or on an ongoing basis. The committee considers everyone interested in the work and success of the college to be a potential contributor and beneficiary of the committee, and, thus, a member, and so all are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Eligibility for voting on official committee business will be limited to members, as defined above, who are also identified as:

- Faculty representative(s) from each department
- Unit-level Assessment Liaison (see below)
- Coordinator of Cocurricular Assessment (see below)
- One representative of the Faculty Council, appointed by the Faculty Council
- One student representative (recognized by the Chair at the meeting and prior to any votes)
- At least one adjunct faculty member (recognized by the Chair at the meeting and prior to any votes)
- Dean, Associate Dean of Instruction, and/or representative of the Office of Research and Planning

## HWC Assessment Committee Roles:

### Executive Officers

*Committee Chair* (6 hours release time OR equivalent stipend)

**Requirements:** Must be a tenured, full-time HWC faculty member. Must have served on the Executive Assessment Committee for at least one year. Nominated and elected by members of the AC on an annual basis.

**Duties:** Set the agenda for regularly scheduled AC meetings. Preside over AC meetings using a modified Robert's Rules of Order. Oversee the development, distribution, and implementation of the Assessment Calendar. Oversee the annual review and revision, if necessary, of AC core documents. Provide oversight for completion of committee deliverables. Coordinate the processes involved in acting on assessment of student learning data. Coordinate and maintain lines of communication between the Assessment Committee and internal HWC constituents. Act as liaison between the AC and the HWC Administration. Work with the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) to implement evidence-based changes based on assessment data. Serve as an assessment ambassador and periodically attend various meetings within the college: for example, the Department Chairs, CAST, etc.

**Deliverables:** Oversee writing of the annual assessment report and other reports associated with assessment processes. Formally submit the annual assessment report to the CAO, and College President. Contribute to *Assessment Times* as well as other modes of communication. Edit and

disseminate the *Assessment Times* newsletter once per semester. Provide regular, ongoing communications to the HWC community about assessment activities, findings, and recommendations. Oversee the Special Assignment process based on deliverables as defined in this charge.

*Vice Chair of General Assessment Planning and Practices* (3 hours release time OR equivalent stipend)

Requirements: Must be a full-time HWC faculty member. Nominated and elected by members of the AC on an annual basis.

Duties: Preside over the AC meeting when the Chair is not present. Facilitate the assessment process, including data collection, for institutional, general education, and/or other large units of student learning assessment.

Deliverables: Provide regular updates to the AC during meetings. Administer all assessment activities, including data collection and dissemination, related to institutional, general education, and/or other large units of student learning assessment. Coordinate and contribute to writing relevant sections of the annual assessment report. Contribute to *Assessment Times* as well as other modes of communication. Oversee the development, distribution, and implementation of the Assessment calendar.

*Vice Chair of Area Assessment Planning and Practices* (3 hours release time OR equivalent stipend)

Requirements: Must be a full-time HWC faculty member. Nominated and elected by members of the AC on an annual basis.

Duties: Attend regular AC meetings. Organize and facilitate Departmental Assessment Liaison meetings. Support Liaison work in selecting coherent units of assessment (this may include reviewing drafts, being cc'd on emails, attending a department meeting, etc.). Consult with and mentor faculty in utilizing assessment results to improve student learning. In coordination with the AC Secretary/Archivist, maintain and revise the HWC Assessment website.

Deliverables: Provide regular updates to the AC during meetings. Work with Departmental Assessment Liaisons to develop calendars for unit assessment projects (following the six stages of Assessment). Maintain and coordinate all smaller unit assessment activities. Coordinate and contribute to writing relevant sections of the annual assessment report. Contribute to *Assessment Times* as well as other modes of communication.

*Secretary and Archivist* (3 hours release time OR equivalent stipend)

Requirements: Nominated and elected by members of the AC on an annual basis.

Duties: Take minutes during the AC meetings, disseminate to AC members, and archive. Disseminate information generated during AC meetings in a variety of manners including emails, the committee website, and partnerships with other committees such as CAST. Maintain a current AC roster and handle communications with those rosters. Manage the committee's document collaboration work via Google Drive, Outlook and other services.

Deliverables: Record minutes from all meetings. Maintain a searchable archive of AC documents and communications, including *Assessment Times* newsletters and all published reports. Maintain the Assessment Committee webpage as a way for other faculty, administrators, staff, accreditation bodies, and the general public to access committee documents. Contribute to and edit *Assessment Times* as well as other modes of communication.

## HWC Assessment Committee Roles: Specialty Roles

*Research Analyst* (6 hours release time OR equivalent stipend. Release time and duties may be divided among multiple people)

Requirements:

- Appointed by AC Chair in consultation with Vice Chairs, and Chief Academic Officer (CAO). Affirmed by majority vote of the AC.
- Specialized knowledge about the assessment of student learning.
- Quantitative and qualitative analytical strategies.
- Background or commensurate experience in mathematics and statistics.
- Knowledge unique to assessment in higher education.

Duties:

- Overseeing the quantitative and qualitative aspects of data analyses for all wings of the committee, including:
  - Unit-level assessment facilitated by 10 departmental liaisons (which may include departmental and program assessment).
  - Cocurricular assessment.
- Ensuring the AC's data is stored securely and analyzed ethically.
- Researching relevant, appropriate, modern, and innovative statistical methods to apply in assessment activities.
- Advising the AC in the research, design, and creation of assessment tools, and making recommendations about the robustness of those instruments.
- Consulting with the Office of Research and Planning, as appropriate.



- Assisting with data collection strategies for various AC activities.
- Performing data cleansing by detecting, correcting, or removing inaccurate data entries.
- Conducting exploratory analysis on these large data sets to gain insights, uncover patterns, detect anomalies, confirm or dispute pre-assumptions, and determine appropriate statistical methods to use.
- Applying a range of appropriate statistical analyses, and providing the AC with reports summarizing relevant findings.
- Integrating statistical analyses of relevant student academic and demographic data obtained through the OpenBook analytics portal.
- Consulting with the Office of Research and Planning, as appropriate.
- Meeting with AC officers, unit-level liaisons, and other committee members, as needed, for each specific assessment project.

*Deliverables:*

- Provide the AC with clean, manageable, and complete data sets.
- Keep data sets secure and, upon request, provide committee members and other interested parties with anonymized aggregate data.
- Create various visualizations and graphs from data, as needed.
- Provide the AC, unit-level liaisons, and other committee members with individualized reports summarizing the relevant findings of statistical analyses performed on large data sets.
- Contribute relevant statistical analyses to each assessment report and to the Annual Assessment Report, as required.
- Contribute articles to the *Assessment Times* as well as to other modes of communication.

*Departmental Assessment Liaisons* (3 hours release time OR equivalent stipend per liaison)

Requirements: Appointed by the AC Chair in consultation with Department Chairs and Chief Academic Officer (CAO) or designee. To be eligible for appointment in this role, the candidate must be prepared to serve a two semester, minimum commitment and serve as a consistent attendee and contributing member of the committee for at least one semester within the year prior to appointment.

Duties: Attend regular AC meetings. Follow the six stages of the HWC Assessment process. Provide regular updates to their department and the *Vice Chair of Area Assessment Planning and Practices*. Design, in consultation with department faculty, a working plan for assessment of chosen units\* within the department as well as all programs\*\* within the department using the six cyclical stages of assessment. Consult with and mentor faculty to utilize assessment results to improve student learning.

Deliverables: Design and maintain, in consultation with the *Vice Chair of Area Assessment Planning and Practices*, an assessment calendar for unit assessment cycles within the department. Submit regular updates to the *Vice Chair of Area Assessment Planning and Practices*. Disseminate results.

Each semester, unit liaisons will provide ongoing updates to the *Vice Chair of Area Assessment Planning and Practices* and to the committee. Liaisons will write at least one article for the fall edition of the *Assessment Times*. Around Week 14 of the spring semester, Liaisons will submit a summary report of their work for the academic year, which also includes information for any programs associated with their department, to the *Vice Chair of Area Assessment Planning and Practices*. This report will be included in the HWCAC Annual Report.

*\*Units must be larger than a single section of a course. If the unit to be assessed includes courses taught across multiple modalities (online, hybrid, face-to-face), then students taking the course in each modality should be included in the assessment.*

*\* Programs are defined as any unit of study resulting in a certificate or a degree.*

*Coordinator of Cocurricular Assessment* (3 hours release time OR equivalent stipend, if faculty; hours worked into weekly duties, in consultation with supervisor, if staff)

Requirements: Appointed by the AC Chair in consultation with the CAO.

Duties: Attend regular AC meetings. Schedule and attend meetings with various groups across the institution to review current assessment practices in order to understand and support student learning outside of the classroom as well as within the classroom. Design, in consultation with staff and committee members, a working plan for assessment of chosen units.

Deliverables: Provide regular updates to the AC. Meet with Deans, leadership of Student Affairs groups, other Student Services, and student clubs to explore assessment as it is currently done and to build partnership in the assessment of student learning across the institution. Coordinate and contribute to writing the Cocurricular Assessment section of the annual Assessment Report. Contribute to the *Assessment Times*.

### Ad Hoc Subcommittees

Subcommittees may form periodically through the academic year to focus on projects (e.g., “Closing the Loop”, public speaking, publications, building partnerships, accreditations). Subcommittees may meet during committee meetings or at other times as needed.