The AC and CAS had a very productive fall semester. Both committees worked hard to implement new policies and revise documents to improve clarity, expectations, and guidelines for various processes related to curriculum and program development and assessment. This newsletter provides information about those changes and other related topics.

CAS and AC SharePoint Sites
All documents and forms related to CAS and AC are located on each committee’s respective SharePoint site. If you want the most updated version of any document or form these are the places to get it. The sites are accessible from on campus and off.

To access these sites, open an Internet browser (Firefox, for example) and type share.heartland.edu in the address box. That will prompt a box to appear on the screen where you will enter your employee username and password. Once in SharePoint, you can search for Assessment Committee or CAS.

CAS SharePoint Site  AC SharePoint Site

What’s New?
"General Education Outcomes" is so yesterday!

HCC’s General Education Outcomes are now officially called Essential Competencies (EC). The categories (critical thinking, problem solving, communication, diversity) and the 20 learning statements have not changed.

The name change more accurately reflects the importance HCC places on those skills in all courses, not just the general education courses. Many other colleges that use the term general education outcomes are facing the same dilemma.

Several alternative titles were suggested and discussed prior to the approval of Essential Competencies.
Master Syllabus Template Revisions

In the fall of 2013 CAS approved several changes to the process documents and Master Syllabus Template.

- The process documents identify the steps that course developers need to take to pass their courses through CAS and AC. We hope that the reformatted documents provide better and more clearly stated directions. These new process documents can be found on the CAS SharePoint site, and are therefore available both on campus and off. However, should anyone have a question or concern, they are always encouraged to contact their area representative.

Similarly, a few changes were made to the Master Syllabus Template in order to clarify areas of concern for both our students and our external supervising bodies.

- Internally, we have altered the pre-requisite format in hopes that students will be able to more easily track their own requirements.
- Externally, one such change was the requirement that all faculty members include a defined Midterm Withdrawal policy on their student syllabi. The needs of financial aid disbursement and state funding appropriations require accurate tracking of students who are pursuing course completion. All instructors are therefore responsible for accurately accounting for students at midterm.

The changes below were recommended by AC and approved by CAS.

- In the learning outcomes grid, all Essential Competencies (formerly General Education Outcomes) listed in the master syllabus must be linked to a specific course outcome. This does not mean that instructors can only assess that EC in the context of the linked course outcome. However, having the outcomes linked does provide a good reference for an instructor who might not be sure when or how that EC can be assessed.
- ECs can still be listed by their abbreviations (CT, PS, CO, DI) if they are listed in a grid with the course learning outcomes, but the full statement for each EC must be included under the grid. If the list method is used for the course outcomes, then the ECs should be listed with them in their full sentence format as well. This will make it easier for instructors to know what the EC is without having to locate the statements on a different document.

Preparing Your Master Syllabus for Review

If you are preparing to submit a new or revised master syllabus for review to AC and CAS, there are some important things to consider when preparing your document:

- Be sure to read and follow the guidelines carefully in the Master Syllabus Template.
- When writing learning outcomes, develop statements that indicate what students will do to achieve each outcome. The words “understand” and “appreciate” are commonly used words, but they do not indicate what students will do to achieve the outcome. There are many descriptive terms associated with Bloom’s Taxonomy that can be used to make learning outcome statements clear and concise.
- AC and CAS members submit their comments directly on the master syllabus you submit. Be sure to read those comments and be prepared to ask about or to address any comments you feel are unclear. Your attendance at the CAS meeting is your opportunity to address the committees. This can be the difference between two weeks or four weeks for approval of your syllabus.
CT2 Assessment Project

All full-time and adjunct instructors (beyond tier 1) should complete the Traffic Light Assessment Form for the Critical Thinking 2 (CT2) Assessment Project, if that outcome is included as a learning outcome in a course you are teaching. The form is available on the Assessment Committee’s SharePoint site in the section titled Faculty Assessment Form Resources.

Contact the Assessment Committee Chair, Nick Schmitt, if you have any questions. Here is a link to the site where you can find CT2 assessment forms and an informational sheet: https://share.heartland.edu/sites/workcenter/543/default.aspx?InstanceID=1

FAQ’s about the CT2 Assessment Project

When is the deadline for submitting the form for this project? The deadline is the end of the Spring 2014 semester. You can submit the form any time prior to the deadline by sending it to Nick Schmitt in the LASS division, placing it in his mailbox (ICB 2100) or by email at nick.schmitt@heartland.edu

What form do I need to complete for the CT2 Assessment Project? The form is titled Traffic Light Assessment Form. It is located on the Assessment Committee SharePoint site as described above. This form is very similar to the traditional Assessment Form that we have used at HCC for several years. However, this form includes some additional items to complete as part of our data collection efforts to assess student achievement of CT2 across curriculums.

Can I use the Traffic Light Assessment Form as part of my yearly self-evaluation? Yes, you can. You are not be required to submit the last page of the form (the data collection page) as part of your yearly self-evaluation packet, but everything else on the form is the same as the traditional Assessment Form that is typically submitted in faculty self-evaluation packets. On a related note, you do not have to submit your completed Traffic Light Assessment Form as part of your self-evaluation packet.

If the Traffic Light Assessment Form is anonymous, why is there a place for the instructor’s name? We left the place for the name on the form because some instructors want to submit one copy of the form for the CT2 project and one copy of the form as part of their yearly self-evaluation. You can simply leave the space blank on the copy that you submit for the CT2 project.

Will I receive individual feedback on my Traffic Light Assessment Form? The purpose of the CT2 Assessment Project is to aggregate data on student achievement of CT2 across HCC’s curriculum. There will be a presentation and a report available by the start of the fall semester regarding the aggregated data, but there will not be feedback to individual instructors regarding their assessment tool or practice. If you would like individual feedback, you should contact your supervisor to provide that for you, or submit the form with your yearly self-evaluation.

Will there be more training dates for this project prior to the deadline? There will be opportunities for one-on-one consultation, probably during a week in April. Watch for an email asking you to submit your preferences for dates and times. There probably will not be training sessions for groups of people like we had several times last fall. However, there is a podcast available that explains the CT2 project and provides instructions for completing the Traffic Light Assessment Form.

CT2 Assessment Project Podcast
Rejecting the Standardized Test

With a growing demand for evidence of student learning, some colleges and universities administer standardized tests to freshman and seniors to measure learning gains. Many school leaders indicate that the practice is not an ideal way to measure student learning, but the practice satisfies accreditors. Sarah Lawrence College is among a number of schools that uses its own assessment system that is a reflection of its values.

That sounds very familiar to our approach at HCC. Sarah Diel-Hunt, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, recently stated,

“The Assessment Committee has considered utilizing national, externally developed measures of student learning in the past as those can yield aggregated data that can be benchmarked, but to date, the AC has always rejected that model and instead HCC has developed its own authentic measures (course outcomes, Program outcomes, Essential Competencies) and its own home-grown instrument to collect data on those outcomes (the Assessment Form and Traffic Light Assessment Form) in the hopes that we collect more authentic and reliable measures of student learning at Heartland that we can use to continuously improve instruction and student learning.”

Read the full article here: http://tinyurl.com/l82c9wo

Thanks to Jennifer Swartout for passing this article along.

New Approach to Transfer

Emily Olmetti, member of the Assessment Committee, passed along this article about a group of 16 public institutions that have agreed to a transfer agreement based on what students know rather than on the courses they have taken or the credits they have earned.

The Interstate Passport Initiative is a set of mutually agreed-upon learning outcomes for lower division courses in the general education core. Students can transfer from one participating institution to another and bring their outcomes, or competencies, with them.

This is an interesting development, and reflects the increasingly important role that learning outcomes play in higher education. Is this particular initiative good? We’ll leave that up to you to decide. Read more
Knowing What Student Know and Can Do: The Current State of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment in U.S. Colleges and Universities

This is an interesting report from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, January 2014. The report highlights many trends in assessment across the U.S. For example,

“Meeting accreditation expectations heads the list for how assessment evidence is used, but internal use by campuses is growing and is considered far more important than external use.”

There are a number of findings and trends, like the above, that reflect learning outcomes assessment at HCC. And, just as we approach assessment of student learning at HCC, the report also states “Faculty are the key to moving assessment forward.”

Read the abridged or full report.

What New Faculty Need to Know About Assessment

As a new faculty member, you will have questions about your students’ learning—as all thoughtful teachers do: Are they really learning what I’m teaching? How well do they understand the key concepts I’m focusing on? Can they apply what they’ve learned in new settings? What can I do better or differently to help students develop the skills and knowledge they need to be effective in this class, in subsequent courses, and in their future life and work? Click this report to read more from Hutchings.


http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/documents/ABfaculty.pdf

Online Resources

Internet Resources for Higher Education Outcomes Assessment
http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/archives/assmt/resource.htm

Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education
http://aahe.org/

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/websiteoverview.html
I’ll ask the question, a few of you will answer for the entire class, and we’ll all pretend this is the same thing as learning.

- Fisher and Frey, 2007

If we are really serious about education, we must have precise ways both of measuring learning outcomes in individual students and of ascertaining whether they are consonant with our educational objectives.

- David Ausubel, “Educational Psychology — a Cognitive View

"We plan. We develop. We deliver. We assess and evaluate the results of the assessment. We revise, deliver the revised material, and assess and evaluate again. Perfection is always just out of reach; but continually striving for perfection contributes to keeping both our instruction fresh and our interest in teaching piqued."

E.S. Grassian

Assessment Conferences

There are many assessment related workshops and conferences offered in state, regional, national and even international contexts. Using your favorite Internet search engine, type in “assessment conferences and workshops” and you will find numerous results. Here are links to some lists of top finds based on one recent search. For each link below, a particular conference was selected for further highlighting.

http://www.assessmentconferences.com/

North Central Association Higher Learning Commission’s (HLC) 2014 Annual Conference in Chicago, IL, April 11-15, 2014. The conference offers a broad range of sessions and services that include pre-conference workshops, approximately 200 general program sessions, an Exhibit Hall, and a Self-Study Fair. Each year, more than 4,000 administrators and faculty from more than 850 higher education institutions located throughout the 19-state HLC region attend this conference.

http://web.uri.edu/assessment/conferences/

Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education (AALHE) 4th Annual Assessment Conference in Albuquerque, NM, June 2-4, 2014. The conference, like the Association, has as its primary focus the practice of the assessment of student learning as a strategy to improve student learning. Thus it is open to all who are engaged in learning assessment—the faculty, administrators, Student Affairs staff, institutional researchers, and others in higher education who collect, analyze, and use assessment data to improve student learning. Conference theme is Emergent Dialogues in Assessment.

http://www.naspa.org/events/2014APC

The 2014 NASPA Assessment and Persistence Conference is to be in San Antonio, TX, June 19-21. The conference is designed to promote student learning and success by strengthening assessment, improving educational quality, and developing intentional persistence programming. Thanks to Deb Gentry for submitting the assessment conference information.

Contact Information
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