

University Days Faculty Discussion of General Education Learning Assessment Results – 1-13-16

With 20 faculty members in attendance at the Spring 2016 Assessment session during University Days on the Lock Haven University campus, Dr. Ed Bowman presented an overview of current expectations followed by an explanation and discussion of assessment findings from the three-year trends reports of three learning outcomes. Dr. Bowman shared the transition from the previous sample rotation to the newly approved 4-year sample rotation, a rotation intended to include only key G.E. assessments from approved courses and to relieve assessment responsibility burdens on coordinators and programs' faculty. In the new process for the 4-year cycle, programs will begin data collection in an academic year (example is AY 2014-15) and provide a summary of findings in the fourth year (example is AY 2017-18). See presentation file with summary results, tables, and graphs on the assessment webpage.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SUMMARY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dr. Bowman shared results from the latest assessment results from Written Communication (WC) summary data. The benchmark for the competencies is 70%, which faculty identified during this discussion as a standard for all of the general education competencies. There are six outcomes for the Written Communication competency. Results for the past year were scores of 87-91% for all outcomes except for Writing Convention which generated an 82% score. Dr. Bowman mentioned that possible issues related to this were that the faculty chose to discontinue for a year to get faculty to decide how to make it stronger. There may be a need for more robust writing assignments and improved reliability/consistency between faculty members who use this rubric for assessment.

Dr. Bowman explained that Information Literacy competency is now integrated in two of the WC competencies (Research Strategies and Documentation). Both outcomes are disciplinary specific involving the ethical use of information. A comment, although not a consensus statement, from an individual from the participating faculty present at the session was that the ethical use of appropriate sources should be included anyway when assessing writing performance. A comment was made also that there is a need to determine where, when, and how faculty will be able to evaluate the authenticity or validity of "documentation".

Related to writing performance, Dr. Lisa Riede commented that she noticed an increase in instances of plagiarism.

Dr. Walt Eisenhower asked if we are comparing our data to external standards, results, or other "global" benchmarks.

Another comment was that we need to assess consistently so that faculty assign rubric scores according to what is competent as opposed to a grade. That is, just because a rubric score of a 70 is earned does not mean the individual student is not performing very well on assignments in class. It simply is an indicator of competency which is the average performance expected according to the rubric.

Dr. Stan Berard suggested that these data show competency rather than excellence and that we want more students to be competent.

Dr. Walt Eisenhower suggested more use of value-added measures with the writing competency assessment. For example, if we could compare assessment data on written communication from 100 level courses with data from 400 level courses. Such a comparison would provide evidence of “value” added over the course of their education at Lock Haven University.

Another comment was that we are now using (only) courses approved for a specific general education competency (i.e. written communication) and most are lower-level courses. Would it make more sense to include 300- and 400-level courses and compare competency benchmarks for indication of value added? We could continue using 100-level courses for assessment but also be able to show growth and the actual impact of reinforcing writing competencies during the students career at Lock Haven University by comparing performance with data from 300- and 400-level courses. As it stands, the assessment of writing competencies occurs early in the students’ LHU careers; therefore, without comparison data of the student’s time at LHU, it is not likely that these early assessments are showing the influence of LHU instruction on written communication by the time students will graduate. The institution’s ability to teach writing should be reflected.

Dr. Lisa Riede suggested these upper-level assessments could be completed at the program level in various disciplines.

HISTORICAL, BEHAVIORAL, AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

Dr. Bowman shared the summary results and made some comments shared with him by Dr. Lynn Bruner who was not able to attend the meeting. He said Dr. Bruner noted that results are promising and encouraging. While a few competency components were slightly less than the 70% benchmark, Dr. Bruner saw potential because the foundational step of helping students with foundational concepts and language is being emphasized.

ORAL COMMUNICATION

Some data came from departments without true oral communication and this will be corrected as the new general education sampling rotation requires that data come only from courses with an approved competency. Dr. Bowman reported that there was a 93% median overall score on the rubric for oral communication. Dr. Lisa Riede said she believes data will become more accurate because the rubric will be applied more “rigorously” by faculty who have a disciplinary background in oral communication. Currently there were a lot more scores of “3” than should be occurring. With increased emphasis on inter-rater reliability, outcome data should more accurately reflect the student’s performance on this competency.

OVERALL OBSERVATIONS FROM DR. ED BOWMAN, CHAIRPERSON OF OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE (OAC)

- Students are performing above the competency level
- Data collection continues to be impacted by data reporting and sample sizes
- For data collection at the program level, appropriate sample size is determined by programs

- There is evidence that LHU is engaged in a culture of robust & sustainable assessment
- OAC will soon be receiving formal feedback from GES and UCC for closing the loop.
- Rubrics can also be used for program level student learning assessment
- Faculty can access four main documents/resources on the assessment page