

Hunter Academic Assessment Plan 2016-2021 DRAFT

Introduction

This assessment plan outlines Hunter College's current and future engagement with the assessment of student learning. Our plan is to deepen our existing faculty-driven process. In implementing this assessment, Hunter will rely on best practices developed locally by faculty and informed by experts in their field as well as the field of assessment.

Hunter College's mission supports "learning in the liberal arts and sciences as a cornerstone of individual development and a vital foundation for a more just and inclusive society." In service of this mission, its 2012-2020 Strategic Plan calls for strengthening the curriculum (I.2.) and encouraging effective teaching (I.3.), both of which rely on systematic, ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes to choose and communicate the best path forward for all members of the Hunter community (III.1.).

Below we describe how we will maintain and expand upon our system for assessing student learning outcomes at Hunter. We describe our goals, our strategies to achieve those goals, resources needed to undertake those strategies, and a timeline for implementation over the next five years.

This plan is dependent upon the development of institutional learning outcomes.

Goals

The overarching aim of student learning assessment activities at Hunter is to assure the fulfillment of the Hunter College mission, to:

- Foster learning for all students that leads to:
 - Successful retention and degree completion across the College
 - Ongoing participation in their communities
- Support the continued development of a strong, integrated curriculum and effective teaching aligned with institution-level goals
- Promote a sustained, self-reflective community of pedagogical practice

Results of student learning outcomes assessment are used to help faculty, staff, departments and programs make decisions about supporting academic programs and services, providing resources, developing institutional goals, and implementing strategies to achieve those goals. The results of student learning outcomes assessment are not used for any punitive purpose against individual faculty, staff, courses or course sections, schools, departments, programs, or any member of the Hunter College community (Resolution on the Use of Assessment Results, passed by the Hunter College Senate on November 11, 2015).

Strategies

Effective assessment is sustained, not periodic, and aligned at all levels with institutional learning goals. The responsibility for creating and implementing assessment plans and for creating student learning outcomes, both for individual courses and programs, lies with individual academic units (e.g., departments, programs, or schools). This policy is consistent with the College's belief that assessment should be tailored to the needs of individual academic units, their students, and pedagogical and curricular priorities.

Assessment of student learning falls into three broad categories:

- **Course and Program Assessment:** In order to follow best practices in assessment, learning outcomes¹ at both the program and course level should be assessed on an ongoing, systematic basis. Academic units and individual faculty should develop student-centered and observable learning outcomes, connect these outcomes to assignments or experiences, assess the achievement of these outcomes, and use their findings to inform pedagogical or curricular innovations or advocate for resources.
- **General Education Requirements Assessment:** The General Education Requirements (GER) Committee, as per its charge from the Hunter College Senate, is to “Lead and coordinate periodic review of courses in general education. Devise program assessment for general education. Receive and review program assessment data; and make recommendations on the basis thereof” in a “faculty driven manner.” The GER Committee will determine, in consultation with the relevant departments and academic units, the extent to which it performs these tasks itself or delegates them to departments and other academic units.
- **Institutional Assessment:** The GER Committee, with the input of the Hunter College community, has also been charged with leading the development of institutional learning outcomes, which will go through the appropriate approval processes. Once these are in place, similar to above, the GER Committee will determine, in consultation with the relevant departments and academic units, how the College will implement assessment of institution-level learning outcomes.

Resources

In order to practice effective assessment, we need faculty development to support and value assessment as a scholarly activity. There are several College-wide bodies and offices involved in assessment that can assist academic units in conducting assessment of student learning. Their roles are as follows:

Hunter College Senate and the Committee on Academic Assessment and Evaluation: Within the parameters of its charter, the Hunter College Senate determines college policy and serves as a forum for dialogue and decision-making.

¹ Professional schools (School of Social Work, School of Nursing, School of Education and the School of Health Professions) sometimes refer to learning outcomes as “competencies”. For the purposes of this assessment plan, the terms are interchangeable.

In November of 1999, the Senate created the Select Committee on Performance Measures and Outcomes Assessment. This early committee focused primarily on learning from assessment processes in our professional schools and sharing this information with departments in the School of Arts & Sciences. On February 24, 2010, the Senate formally established the Standing Committee on Academic Assessment and Evaluation (CAAE), which includes in its membership faculty members from across all schools as well as the Director of Assessment, and holds several roles:

- Develop, implement, and review all college policies and procedures related to academic assessment
- Serve as an advisory body to academic departments and programs engaged in academic assessment
- Inform the academic community about the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) accreditation standards in relation to academic assessment
- Coordinate with other relevant Senate committees
- Report regularly to the Hunter Senate

The work of this Committee is complemented by that of various other committees of the Senate, such as the GER Committee, the Undergraduate Course of Study Committee, the Graduate Course of Study Committee, and the Committee on Academic Freedom.

Office of Assessment: The mission of the Office of Assessment at Hunter College is to support College-wide efforts to increase the institution's knowledge about its students, including their learning outcomes and other educational experiences, in order to continuously support innovative teaching practices, curricula, and support services. With respect to the assessment of student learning, the Office promotes faculty-driven assessment efforts by providing expertise in the form of workshops, one-on-one consultations, and online resources for developing best practices in course-, program-, and institution-level assessment. It also partners with ACERT to promote the sharing of best practices in assessment, pedagogy, and technology among faculty across all academic departments and programs.

Office of Institutional Research (IR): IR supports the college's decision-making, strategic planning and assessment efforts through a variety of activities, including maintaining the college factbook, reporting for internal and external constituencies and evaluating programs and policies. IR also administers two national benchmarking surveys directly related to pedagogy and curriculum: the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory.

Assessment Advisory Board (AAB): The purpose of the AAB, the membership of which is drawn from each academic unit, is twofold. First, the AAB serves as a conduit of information about assessment from the administration, CAAE, and various academic units to the broader Hunter community. Second, the AAB can provide feedback to the administration and CAAE about the

needs and challenges of the Hunter community in relation to assessment and its views about current and proposed assessment policies and programs.

Academic Center for Excellence in Research and Teaching (ACERT): ACERT seeks to promote excellence in teaching and research at Hunter. In collaboration with key offices, the Center integrates existing faculty development activities with new workshops and seminars based on input from faculty and Hunter's academic community. These seminars allow participants to share and discuss high-impact practices that faculty can incorporate into their teaching and research. The Center fosters a community in which faculty use innovative pedagogy, technology, and assessment to enhance their activities as teachers and scholars, and thus to facilitate engaged learning.

Provost's Office: The Provost's Office shares responsibility with the Hunter College Senate for Hunter's academic policies, academic support services, and other initiatives vital to the academic quality of Hunter College. In this role it oversees the faculty development and support activities housed within the Office of Assessment and is a key partner in ACERT's programming. The Provost's Office also receives and compiles the annual assessment reports from each academic unit, and analyzes the status of academic assessment overall.

The Provost's Office also plays a role in elevating the scholarly nature of assessment college-wide. In this capacity it has instituted the Assessment Fellows Program, which elects faculty members for the span of one year to further develop and share their assessment expertise with others across campus and within their fields.

Dean's Offices: Schools within Hunter College include their own assessment specialists who provide support specifically suited to the needs of its faculty, staff and students. For example, within the School of Arts & Sciences, the Assistant Dean for Program Development, Assessment, & Review works closely with faculty and staff on the overlapping areas of learning outcomes assessment, curricular development, and academic program review.

Hunter College Libraries: Librarian expertise in information literacy is a valuable resource for promoting Hunter College's Information Literacy Learning Outcome. Academic departments, schools, and programs across the college partner with Hunter College faculty librarians who contribute to classroom instruction, assignment design, grading, and curriculum planning that drives student success in information literacy across the college.

Instructional Computing & Information Technology (ICIT): In addition to the pedagogical support ICIT provides faculty, ICIT supports faculty in the use of technology in assessment, advising on the best platform to achieve specific goals, whether through Blackboard, Qualtrics, databases, ePortfolio, or any other system.

Recommendations

As described in the 2014 Periodic Review Report, Hunter has strengthened and expanded its assessment practices across the College. Departments are increasing their capacity for assessment, their sophistication in the use of its tools, and their application of findings to pedagogical and curricular decisions. Professional schools are engaged in detailed student learning assessment in alignment with the goals of their specialized areas of study and their accrediting bodies. Overall, assessment practices at Hunter have evolved since the 2009 Self-Study, setting the stage for further growth in the years to come.

Based on this history, we expect the following by AY2018-2019:

- **Course and Program Assessment:**
 - All academic units to have regularly conducted assessment.
 - All academic units to have used the results to analyze how to best meet the needs of their faculty and students.
 - All academic units to have reported on this self-evaluation and resulting development in practice through annual reports to the Provost.
- **General Education Assessment:**
 - The College to have assessed, analyzed, and responded to general education learning outcomes on an ongoing basis.
- **Institutional Assessment:**
 - The College to have assessed, analyzed, and responded to institution-level learning outcomes on an ongoing basis.
 - The College to have aligned course, program, and institutional learning outcomes with each other.

In order to implement these above recommendations, the College must maintain and develop its capacities for assessment. Therefore, we recommend the following for the period leading up to AY 2020-2021:

- Institutional leaders demonstrate sustained support for promoting an ongoing culture of assessment and pedagogical and curricular innovation. This requires the College allocating sufficient resources--including but not limited to reliable funding, course releases, administrative support, and the maintenance of the bodies and programs listed above under "Resources"--to allow faculty to conduct meaningful and useful assessment and act upon assessment findings.
- The College ensure the purpose of assessment remains to support student learning and faculty teaching and that decisions about assessment are made by faculty.
- Assessment results be shared for appropriate use by relevant administrators, so that they may prepare required reports for CUNY, MSCHE, and other accrediting bodies, and faculty so that they may determine how to act upon assessment findings.