

Norco College Course Assessment Plan—Revised Fall 2013

In Spring, 2012 semester, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (formerly the Office of Student Success) established a schedule for all disciplines to follow to ensure that each course it offers is regularly assessed. Disciplines who want to develop their own schedule for assessment are free to do so, but should confer with the Greg Aycock in doing so. Here are some features of the course assessment plan:

- The plan, and schedule, stipulates that every course taught at NC be assessed at least once every four years. Disciplines who are inclined to assess certain courses more frequently are naturally free to do so, but no course taught regularly at Norco should go unassessed for more than four years.
- The cycle of assessment includes four steps: Step 1: developing an assessment plan; Step 2: gathering data on student learning; Step 3: analyzing the data and implementing changes to improve student learning; Step 4: gathering data after implementing changes in course. Disciplines may plan and gather data on courses scheduled for assessment in one semester, then use the next semester to evaluate data and consider improvements, and in the final semester (the next semester the course is taught) close the loop by implementing the improvements and gathering data on them —there is no expectation that every course complete an assessment cycle every semester.
- Assessment plans for the coming academic year should be specified in detail in the annual program review document, filed at the end of May each year. The plan should indicate which courses are being assessed in the next year and what methods are being employed.
- Multi-section courses (those with four or more sections) should ordinarily be assessed collaboratively. All sections should be assessed if possible, though in some instances a representative sampling of sections might be assessed. See below for some approaches to doing collaborative assessment.
- Single-section courses can be assessed by their instructors, using the approach outlined below.
- Courses with two or three sections can employ either a single-section or multi-section assessment approach—though collaboration is always encouraged.
- Courses that are not routinely taught should begin assessment in the semester they are taught. For instance, if your department decides to offer a course that hasn't been taught in five years, priority should be given to gathering data on that course.
- Instructors must employ an authentic direct assessment technique in assessing their courses. Learning gains surveys alone are not sufficiently valid to constitute meaningful assessment.
- Instructors must make an effort to collect the kind of assessment data that can be used to improve the course. Confirming that learning is taking place through a simple pre/post test and suggesting that no changes are necessary is not sufficiently rigorous.
- Disciplines must submit timely reports on their methods, data, and what they have learned that might be used for improvement. The Institutional Effectiveness Office will provide a template for these reports, which can (when completed) be emailed directly to the IE Office. (Beginning in spring 2014, assessment reporting will be done on TracDat.) Disciplines should include these reports in their annual program reviews.

Assessing larger-enrollment, multi-section courses should involve a somewhat different approach than assessing single- or few-section courses. Instructors in multi-section courses ought to work

together to gather data about the course and improve learning in it through modifications in curriculum or pedagogy. Instructors of courses with fewer sections are certainly encouraged to collaborate whenever possible, but in many instances, they can legitimately claim to be assessing the course when they assess their section.

Larger course assessment

Historically, when Norco College has offered the following courses it has usually done so with four or more sections:

| | | | | | |
|--------|--------|---------|--------|--------|-------|
| ACC-1A | BUS-10 | ENG-60A | HUM-10 | MAT-63 | SOC-1 |
| ACC-1B | CHE-2A | ENG-60B | KIN-30 | MAT-64 | SPA-1 |
| AMY-2A | CIS-1A | GEG-1 | KIN-4 | MUS-19 | THE-3 |
| AMY-2B | COM-1 | GEG-1L | MAT-11 | PHI-10 | |
| ANT-1 | COM-9 | GUI-47 | MAT-12 | PHI-11 | |
| ANT-2 | ENG-1A | HES-1 | MAT-35 | POL-1 | |
| ART-6 | ENG-1B | HIS-6 | MAT-36 | PSY-1 | |
| BIO-1 | ENG-50 | HIS-7 | MAT-52 | PSY-9 | |

The College typically offers around 500 - 600 sections each term, of which slightly more than half were distributed among these multi-section courses. (Around 400 courses are regularly taught. In fall, 2013, the college offers 239 courses.) Regular cycles of assessment focused on these courses, with perhaps less frequent efforts to assess the courses with fewer sections, will create a solid culture of assessment at Norco College.

For accountability purposes, these multi-section courses fall under the following departments:

| BEIT | COMMUNICATION | HUMANITIES | NAT SCIENCES | SOC SCIENCES |
|--------|---------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| ACC-1A | COM-1 | ART-6 | AMY-2A | ANT-1 |
| ACC-1B | COM-9 | HUM-10 | AMY-2B | ANT-2 |
| BUS-10 | ENG-1A | MUS-19 | BIO-1 | GUI-47 |
| CIS-1A | ENG-1B | PHI-10 | CHE-2A | HIS-6 |
| | ENG-50 | PHI-11 | GEG-1 | HIS-7 |
| | ENG-60A | SPA-1 | GEG-1L | POL-1 |
| | ENG-60B | THE-3 | HES-1 | PSY-1 |
| | | | KIN-30 | PSY-9 |
| | | | KIN-4 | SOC-1 |
| | | | MAT-11 | |
| | | | MAT-12 | |
| | | | MAT-35 | |
| | | | MAT-36 | |
| | | | MAT-52 | |
| | | | MAT-63 | |
| | | | MAT-64 | |

Disciplines may choose from several different collaborative approaches to directly assess these courses:

- Some might choose to embed common questions on final exams that map to course SLOs.
- Some might choose to administer a common final examination in which questions were mapped to particular SLOs.
- Some might choose to develop a common late-term assignment, samples of which could be evaluated for evidence that students demonstrated achievement of SLOs.
- Some might sample work done late in the course and evaluate it against a rubric for evidence that students demonstrated achievement of SLOs. In some instances, eportfolios might facilitate this process.
- Other approaches might be deemed acceptable after consultation with NAC or the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. In some instances, disciplines might choose to develop a common assessment instrument but evaluate their own students' achievement of course SLOs individually, then aggregate the results and meet (perhaps virtually) to discuss their implications.

A vital last step in the assessment of multi-section courses is to summarize the findings across all sections in a short report (see Appendix). This report should then be filed with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. By spring 2014, as noted earlier, reporting processes will employ TracDat software and be entirely online.

Single-section courses or courses with only two or three sections

Courses with few sections might still be assessed collaboratively if two or more instructors routinely teach it. Collaborative assessment might also be possible if Norco instructors collaborate with those at other RCCD colleges. But for courses in which meaningful collaboration is impossible, we ask instructors to employ the following strategy:

- Direct Assessment: Instructors will undertake an assessment project selecting from any of the following direct assessment approaches:
 - Pre-test/Post-test mapped to all or most of the SLOs for the course
 - Sample work done late in the course evaluated against a rubric for evidence of achievement of one or more SLO(s). Projects/assignments in Eportfolios might facilitate this process. Rubrics might employ a simple 4-point scale indicating how fully the student achieved the specific course outcome (4 = strong achievement, 3 = moderate achievement, 2 = slight achievement, 1 = no achievement), with results aggregated to show which SLOs were problematical.
 - Map questions on final exam and/or late-term tests to all or most of the SLOs for the course.
 - If you are considering approaches other than above, consultation with NAC or the Office of Student Success is suggested.
- Administer a Survey: Since there will be little, if any, dialogue with colleagues about the assessment, feedback will be elicited from students by requiring responses to at least three open-ended questions about their perception of the course in a survey:
 - What can you identify as the main things you learned, or improved in, as a result of taking this course? What skills, areas of knowledge, etc. did the course teach you or help you improve?
 - What aspects of the course, and the teaching of it, helped you best to learn? What, in other words, would you recommend that the instructor do the same way the next time he or she teaches the course?

- What aspects of the course, and the teaching of it, helped you least to learn? What, in other words, would you recommend that the instructor change the next time he or she teaches the course?

Instructors are free to add additional questions to the survey or modify these three questions to suit the specific features of the course. A model survey is available at the assessment website: <http://faculty.rcc.edu/norcocollege/assessment/documents.jsp>

- Complete a report: Instructors will, finally, complete a report (see Appendix) that asks them to evaluate where students had particular difficulty achieving specific SLOs and make recommendations for improvement, to be enacted through curricular and/or pedagogical changes by whoever next taught the course.
- File your report: Reports will be filed with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness no later than the end of the first week of the following semester.

Instructors who wish to employ an alternate method of assessing their course are asked to seek the advice of the Dean of IE or NAC to ensure that the method complies with ACCJC guidelines.

Models of good single-section and collaborative course assessments are available at the NAC website (<http://faculty.rcc.edu/norcocollege/assessment/documents.jsp>). For all questions about assessment, please contact either Greg Aycock (greg.aycock@norcocollege.edu) or Arend Flick (arend.flick@norcocollege.edu).

Appendix
Norco College Course Assessment Report

Course: _____

Instructor: _____

Semester: _____

Is this the initial assessment or follow-up (closing the loop)?

☐ Initial

☐ Follow-up

1. Please write a short narrative summary of the data collected for the course SLO(s). Were you generally satisfied with the results? In which areas or SLOs (if you assessed more than one) did the data indicate students had the most difficulty? To what do you attribute that difficulty? Which areas or SLOs did they find themselves achieving with greatest success? **Please attach assessment instrument and data summary files (spreadsheets, tally sheets, etc) to this report.**
2. **If this is an initial assessment**, what are some suggestions for improving learning in the course the next time it's taught? What advice would you offer to the next faculty member(s) who teaches the course, based on data and experience teaching the course?
3. **If this is a follow-up (closing the loop)**, did the changes that were made to the course result in improvement of student learning from the first assessment? If so, how? If not, why did improvement not occur? What advice would you offer to the next faculty member(s) who teaches the course, based on data and experience teaching the course?
4. What suggestions, if any, do you have for modifying the course outline of record and/or the SLOs for the course?