

Assessment Committee Minutes
December 13 and 14, 2007
12 – 2 pm

Members present (December 13): Paul Boyd-Batstone, Jennifer Coots, Cathy Ducharme, Marquita Grenot-Scheyer, Karen Hakim-Butt, Don Haviland, Ruth Knudson, Dan O'Connor, Kristin Powers, Ali Rezaei, Nancy Sheley, Steve Turley

I. Minutes/summary

The December 13, 2007 meeting summary was approved

II. Reporting

The committee discussed whether to remove or alter Questions 1 and 4 on the College of Education report, since these questions apply only to CTC-related programs. Question 1 was left unchanged. The committee felt this question gives important context (has enrollment gone up or down dramatically? has it lost faculty?) that can be used to explain student outcomes or program needs. The group felt that much of this data might be compiled centrally (through the Assessment Office working with Institutional Research) in the future – but expressed concern about the accuracy of the data from the university. Question 4 was altered to make it clear that the question is optional and to give some specific examples of some things programs might like to include as evidence.

The committee also considered the questions related to schedules for analysis and reporting of data. There was agreement that both should be ongoing, taking place regularly. After reviewing options, the committee decided on splitting the reporting schedules for CTC-related and non-CTC related programs. CTC-related programs will have their annual reports due each January. In the years when they must complete Biennial or Program Assessment reports, these reports will be substituted for the College of Education report format. Non-CTC related programs will have the regular College of Education report format due in May each year. Don will work with the University Assessment Coordinator to get written confirmation that this arrangement is acceptable.

The committee began considering possible statements for how to convey the expectation that data will be collected and analyzed regularly. After exploring possible motions, the group asked the chair to prepare a possible statement for consideration at the December 14 meeting.

III. NCATE Standard 1 Elements and the Conceptual Framework

Don reviewed possible options for aligning the Conceptual Framework with the NCATE Standard 1 elements to allow for aggregation of program data. One option is to leave it up to programs to link their learning outcomes to both the Conceptual Framework and NCATE elements. A second option is to align the Conceptual Framework elements as they currently stand to the NCATE elements at the central level. A third option is to “break-up” the Conceptual Framework elements into more behavioral statements and align these elements with the NCATE elements. Finally, a fourth option is to adopt the NCATE elements as the primary elements of our conceptual framework.

The only decision needed at this time was whether to allow the alignment to take place at the program level (option 1) or to have it done centrally (options 2-4). The committee agreed that the alignment should be done centrally so that there is a stable link between each Conceptual Framework and NCATE element. This direction will be provided to program faculty when they work on their assessment plans in Spring 2008.

IV. Student Learning Outcomes

The committee reviewed a draft of a handout which outlines the basic definition of a student learning outcome and the criteria for a “good” learning outcome. There was discussion about some of the criteria. For instance, while the handout states that generally outcomes are focused on one behavior, this may not always be the case – particularly in graduate education where students are expected to display complex skills. The handout is intended as a guide –

not as an absolute statement of what an outcome must be. The committee added a point that outcomes should be able to inform program improvement efforts. It also clarified a statement by saying that each outcome should align with one of the Conceptual Framework elements. The handout will be revised so that the examples of strong outcomes come from the PAES binders and examples of weak statements are developed by changing these strong outcomes to demonstrate how it might have been different.

V. Assessment Plan Layout

The committee reviewed two options for assessment plan layouts after considering what the basic goals and expectations for the plans are. After some discussion, the group agreed that the second option presented was preferred, in part because (with some revisions) it will look similar to the current table that programs are using to organize and report their assessment data. Don will make some changes to this version and the group will take up its discussion of the report format at the December 14 meeting.

The committee also discussed the importance of working with Faculty Council as it moves forward with its assessment documents and plans. There was a question about whether the Faculty Council needed to approve the assessment plan format. The group also discussed the importance of being able to have faculty move forward with some confidence that the documents are relatively “stable” given that NCATE will be returning in less than 2 years. The committee agreed that it is important to consult with Faculty Council in the spring and one faculty member said he doubted the Council would request major changes to anything the Assessment Committee is developing because much of it is so basic.

Members present (December 14): Paul Boyd-Batstone, Jennifer Coots, Cathy Ducharme, Marquita Grenot-Scheyer, Don Haviland, Ruth Knudson, Ali Rezaei, Steve Turley

I. Assessment Plan Template

The Committee continued its discussion from the December 13 meeting about the draft of the Assessment Plan Template. As it reviewed each of the pieces of the “Option 2” document, it began to surface a variety of questions and issues that will be important to consider in the future.

One topic was the question of transition points. The committee felt that it was helpful to think about the “flow chart” portion of the plan as a series of phases, rather than as a series of gates or transition points through which students pass. At the same time, it recognized that NCATE and perhaps others wants to see that the college has some clear transition points at which students are “checked” before they can pass through to the next phase of their education. It may be that the flow chart is both a series of developmental phases AND discrete transition points that a student must pass. The transition point can be one where we collect basic “yes/no” data (e.g., have they taken the program prerequisites or had them waived due to equivalencies or not?). Or the transition point might contribute to larger assessment efforts. For instance, while a student must complete an oral interview for admission into some programs (a yes/no transition item), a program might be able to use data from this interview and one from a comparable exit interview to determine how students’ dispositions have changed during the program.

The committee also discussed the nature of learning outcomes statements and their alignment to evidence when it reviewed a working draft of the assessment plan template. Participants noted that some assignments in the draft were identified as collecting data for multiple learning outcomes. There was an extensive conversation about

whether this was a feasible approach in terms of the time and effort required of programs. The group agreed that the assessment system will require that a program provide discrete data for *each outcome*. Therefore, it will not be acceptable for a single assignment to result in a single score and then have that same score reported for more than one outcome. It is possible for program faculty to construct a rubric for an assignment that reaches beyond assessing just ONE outcome. However, doing so can be complex and take time. It will also take more time to then report the data on separate outcomes from that one assignment. Some group members favored making a clear statement that programs must have only one outcome assessed per assignment or instrument, while others favored giving programs the flexibility to try something more complex but stressing that the expectation will be that they provide unique data for each outcome and that the process required for this can be more time consuming. The committee seemed to move in this latter direction but no firm decision was reached. Therefore, the question of what we expect from programs in terms of data will need to be taken up next semester. Will we require one assignment per learning outcome or expect that programs provide unique data points for each outcome – giving them the freedom to opt for a more complex approach?

The committee discussed whether or not the current draft of the assessment plan template should also include a table where programs list the “program effectiveness data” (e.g., # of faculty, course evaluation results) that they will examine each semester. The members agreed that this was necessary but should wait until the fall so that program faculty are not overwhelmed and can focus on student learning outcomes. However, the committee said that faculty should be alerted to the fact that this request will be coming to them in the future as part of the overall assessment system.

A member offered the motion that the committee “accept the candidate assessment performance template draft for a Spring 2008 pilot.” The motion was passed unanimously.

II. Spring 2008 Workshops

The committee discussed the format for the spring 2008 assessment workshops to be led by Mary Allen. Don invited feedback on the content of the workshops via email by December 21st. One member suggested looking into having LED projectors available for each group so that they can hook up a laptop and project the typed text onto the wall so the whole group can participate. Another member suggested sending Mary Allen the SLOs from each program so that she can diagnose the needs in the college. Cathy agreed to send the outcomes to Don.

The committee asked Don to speak with the Dean about her preference for a preferred start time for the workshops. The Dean had said 9:30 was her desired time but the group asked Don to see if 10 am was possible.

III. Draft Policy Statement

Don presented the draft of the policy statements discussed on December 13 related to expectations for programs to collect and analyze outcomes data. Some revisions were made and the policy statements (attached) were approved by the committee unanimously.

IV. Rubrics and Transition Points

The committee agreed to take up the questions of expectations regarding rubrics and college-wide transition points early in the spring semester.

V. Meeting Times

The next meeting of the committee was set for January 24th from 1-3 pm. Don will secure a room and confirm the date with committee members. He will also send out a schedule before the break to solicit preferences for a regular meeting time next semester. The members present agreed the committee should meet bi-weekly in the spring.