Program Assessment Recommendations, 2021-22

A program assessment review team made up of two OTLE staff and five faculty (two from the IAC and three from Senate) reviewed the program assessment plans and reports that were submitted for this year's assessment cycle. Based on the general patterns we observed, we are offering five recommendations to all programs as they approach future reports and plans.

Set a cycle timeline that is appropriate to the degree.

Observation: Some programs, for instance, have their plan set up on a 3 year rotation to cycle through all of their outcomes, but the degree itself is only 2 years long. This would make it difficult to see the effects of changes from cohort to cohort

Recommendation: Spread the assessment rotation out over the number of years that it takes to cycle through all of your program's coursework.

Use artifact/s that can show specific, observable evidence that students performed the indicated skill set.

Observation: Some programs used a final course grade or even a broad, comprehensive test as evidence as a measure to assess a fairly narrowly defined outcome or skill set. For instance, using a final course grade to assess whether a student achieved the following outcome would not be appropriate: "Students can synthesize relevant theory and past research on a political science issue or challenge."

Recommendation: In most cases, a specific assignment (with a rubric), a targeted quiz, or a relatively focused section of a test will be the appropriate scope for determining whether or not students have achieved a particular outcome. Sometimes outcomes are articulated in a broader way to begin with. In these cases, it is important to find multiple complementary artifacts that, together, demonstrate proficiency. In some cases, the outcome itself may simply be too broadly articulated; in this case, consider rewriting it.

Include rubrics or copies of assignments, test questions, etc.

Observation: For reviewers, it is difficult to know whether or not the data presented (assignment scores, etc.) actually reflect an evaluation of student outcome achievement.

Recommendation: Provide the test questions or the assignment prompt and/or any rubrics related to the artifacts that you are evaluating.

Provide sample student work.

Observation: For reviewers, it is difficult to know whether or not the data presented (assignment scores, etc.) actually align well with the outcomes or whether the scoring actually captures the different levels of student achievement.

Recommendation: Provide sample student work. For example, if the artifact is an essay, provide a copy of one high achieving example, one example that did not achieve the target threshold, and perhaps one mid-range example, if there is a wide distribution. Remember to remove any identifying information.

Final note:

Please note that your plans and reports were reviewed by an individual committee member and that you may encounter conflicting observations and advice, as many assessment models and theories exist. This list of recommendations is intended to help clarify the feedback provided to you and to identify the committee's overall takeaways so that we can continually improve and streamline the assessment process on campus.