

Assessment Handbook

College of Arts and Sciences Lewis & Clark College

Introduction

This handbook provides an overview of academic assessment in the CAS. In addition, it lays out guidelines for the annual report on learning outcomes to be submitted by departments and programs.

In its simplest form, assessment addresses the following question:

Do our students learn what we expect them to learn?

We use **Achievement**, **Accountability**, and **Action** as the three **As** that should inform the assessment process in the CAS. Specifically, these include defining the goals that we expect our students to achieve, accountability in measuring outcomes, and taking action in response to the assessment findings.

The direction and focus of assessment activities at the department and program level are dictated by the College mission statement and the five essential elements of a liberal arts education.

The mission of Lewis & Clark College is to know the traditions of the liberal arts, to test their boundaries through ongoing exploration, and to hand on to successive generations the tools and discoveries of this quest. By these means the College pursues the aims of all liberal learning: to seek knowledge for its own sake and to prepare for civic leadership. The College carries out this mission through undergraduate programs in the arts and sciences and postgraduate programs in the closely related professions of education, counseling, and law. The College mounts these programs as both separately valid and mutually supportive enterprises. In all its endeavors it seeks to be a community of scholars who are alive to inquiry, open to diversity, and disciplined to work in an interdependent world.

The five elements essential to a liberal arts education are outlined each year in the *Lewis & Clark College Catalog* (p.11 in 2008-2009).

Lewis & Clark considers the following elements to be essential to a liberal arts education:

1. *Mastery of the fundamental techniques of intellectual inquiry: effective writing and speaking, active reading, and critical and imaginative thinking.*
2. *Exposure to the major assumptions, knowledge, and approaches in the fine arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences.*

3. *Critical understanding of important contemporary and historical issues using modes of thought that are evaluative as well as descriptive and analytic, and that consider the relationship between thought and action.*
4. *Awareness of international and cross-cultural issues and gender relations.*
5. *Application of theory and knowledge developed in the liberal arts to the search for informed, thoughtful, and responsible solutions to important human problems.*

For assessment to be effective, evidence must be collected systematically using a variety of sources and methods. Some useful sources of assessment data for the CAS are listed below.

Sources of Evidence for Assessment

- Output Measures
 - Number of Graduates by Program & Year http://www.lclark.edu/cgi-bin/accreditation.cgi?page=cas_tool_kit.html
 - Credit Hour Production by Department & Year http://www.lclark.edu/cgi-bin/accreditation.cgi?page=cas_tool_kit.html
 - Grade point Averages by Department & Year (see previous link to webpage)
- Measures of Quality & Performance
 - Department/Program Annual Assessment of Learning Outcomes - the latest reports for each department may be found on the assessment website http://www.lclark.edu/cgi-bin/accreditation.cgi?page=cas_tool_kit.html
 - Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) exam for general education goals related to analytical reasoning and writing
 - Sample of freshmen tested in fall
 - Sample of seniors tested in spring
 - Observed difference between mean L&C scores and L&C predicted scores for both freshmen & seniors (predicted scores based on SAT/ACT entering scores)
 - “Value added” represented by difference between L&C senior mean score and L&C freshmen mean score

- Statistical analysis provides comparison to peer schools
- Surveys
 - NSSE data for both freshmen and seniors
 - CIRP data for freshmen
 - HEDS senior survey – self-reported student assessment in several areas of learning related to general education
http://www.lclark.edu/cgi-bin/accreditation.cgi?page=heds_ge.html
 - Periodic alumni surveys
- Department/Program Reviews
 - Departmental self-studies prepared as part of NWCCU Accreditation Self-Study – updated periodically in preparation for ten-year accreditation review. Maintained on the assessment website http://www.lclark.edu/cgi-bin/accreditation.cgi?page=dept_self_st.html (presently summary reports for each department/program are included under Standard 2)
 - Internal reviews conducted periodically as needed
 - External reviews conducted of major programs with each major program reviewed once every ten years

Department/Program Annual Report on Learning Outcomes

Annually each department and program offering a major must prepare a learning outcomes assessment report. The following paragraphs provide background and guidelines for preparing these reports.

The process of academic program assessment in the CAS at Lewis & Clark College is based on the following five principles.

- a. Assessment is an ongoing process (work in progress) that needs to be routinely revised and updated.
- b. A simple structure that may be used by all departments and programs is essential.

- c. Assessment must also be flexible to accommodate disciplines across the three academic divisions – Mathematical and Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and Arts and Humanities.
- d. Multiple methods of assessment should be encouraged, both within programs and across programs.
- e. Appropriate feedback mechanisms should be established for revising both goals and methods of assessment.

A fundamental assumption is that the learning outcomes objective for each major program are directly related to the College's academic mission and to one or more of the essential elements of a liberal arts education (see earlier section.) The annual assessment report should include sections for each of the categories listed below:

1. Intended Educational Outcomes of the Major.
2. Related College Goals.
3. Methods for Assessing Outcomes, and Criteria for Success.
4. Summary of Data Collected.
5. Use of Results.

Each "Intended Educational Outcome" should be linked to one or more of the broader goals contained in the mission statement or the essential elements. Departments and programs are encouraged to limit the number of outcomes assessed each year but to change or substitute outcomes for assessment from year to year. For example, a department may believe that the goals related to a particular educational outcome have been consistently achieved and that it would be beneficial to focus on another learning outcome.

The College's system of assessment encourages the use of multiple methods and means of program assessment. Some of the more popular methods include the following.

- System of rubrics applied to senior thesis/project
- Comprehensive end of program tests
- Surveys of Seniors
- Exit interviews using a standard set of questions
- Assessment imbedded in key required courses
- Portfolios of student work selected from different stages of the program

Assessment at the department/program level requires consensus among the faculty about priority of learning outcomes and agreement about the meaning of the assessment results. Assessment can then inform future program changes. Indeed, the most common use of assessment evidence occurs when departmental faculty review results and propose changes in course content, pedagogy, curricular requirements, etc. A more subtle outcome of the current assessment system has been the increased emphasis on using the major capstone experience as the instrument for conducting learning outcomes assessment. Departments are encouraged to report assessment evidence using a narrative or outline form. **Successful implementation of learning outcomes assessment requires that a) tangible evidence (data) is reported and b) the department/program response to evidence is documented.**

In addition to the narrative assessment report described above, departments/programs should complete a summary form (Appendix A) for at least two of the learning outcome objectives. The purpose of the summary form is to provide internal and external audiences with evidence in a uniform and concise format covering all departments and programs. This form may be accessed online at http://www.lclark.edu/cgi-bin/accreditation.cgi?page=cas_tool_kit.html, which is the URL for the assessment website.

Learning outcomes assessment at Lewis & Clark is an iterative process that will require regular revision and refinement. Since the implementation of the current system (which began in 2001), some departments discovered that the methods they initially proposed either did not produce the desired evidence or were too ambitious in scope. These difficulties led them to adopt different methods. It is especially important for departments to narrow the number of outcomes assessed so that the collection of evidence is manageable.

Assessment of General Education

General education goals are assessed in a variety of ways. Departments and programs have a responsibility to assess general education learning outcomes at the course level.

- For courses that are designed primarily to satisfy general education requirements the form included as Appendix B should be used. Currently these are the “perspectives” courses in mathematical and natural sciences that meet Category A and Category B of the Science and Quantitative Reasoning requirement.

- For courses that are part of a departmental curriculum and that may also be used to meet other general education requirements including Creative Arts, International Studies, and Category C (Quantitative Reasoning) the form included as Appendix C should be used. For the annual report covering 2008-09, each department is asked to complete an assessment report on one course that is frequently used by students to meet a general education requirement, using either **Form B** or **Form C** as appropriate. Form B and Form C can be accessed at http://www.lclark.edu/cgi-bin/accreditation.cgi?page=cas_tool_kit.html.

Assessment Oversight

Oversight of learning outcomes assessment is the responsibility of the Assessment Committee, which is a sub-committee of the Committee on the Curriculum and is chaired by the Director of Assessment. The Director of Institutional Research is an ex officio member of the Assessment Committee. Just as departments/programs annually revise and update their assessment systems, the Assessment Committee periodically reviews the learning outcomes system in the CAS. From time to time, assessment workshops will be conducted for department chairs.

Most departments and programs conclude their annual assessment activities by the end of the academic year. Consequently, we have established a target date of June 15 for submission of the department/program annual assessment report. It is critically important that all reports be submitted by this date in order to prepare an accreditation report to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

Contact people

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Appendix A (Form A)
Summary form learning outcomes assessment
Complete this form for at least two department/program learning outcomes

Department/Program Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Year:

Department/Program (major):

Total No. of Graduates for Academic Year:

No. of Graduates Assessed on this Objective:

Learning objective (identify components, if appropriate)

Percent exceeding expectations for this objective *

Percent minimally meeting or falling short of expectations for this objective *

Briefly describe the assessment methodology used for this objective

Provide a summary (qualitative and quantitative) of assessment evidence for this goal based on the consensus of the department's faculty

Indicate the department/program proposed or anticipated response to assessment evidence for this objective

Indicate department/program changes addressed during the past two years as a result of prior year assessments for this objective

* Explain any special circumstances regarding percentages meeting or falling short of expectations

Appendix B (Form B)
Form for assessment of Science Category A & Category B courses

Department Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes

Year:

Department:

General Education Requirements, pp. 12-17, College Catalog

SQR: Cat. A - Science Laboratory

SQR: Cat. B - Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning: Sciences

Course Number & Title:

Estimated number of students taking this course to satisfy general education requirements (use course evaluation data as appropriate):

Total number of students enrolled in this course for the academic year:

Which general education requirement is met with this course? (See list of requirements above.)

Briefly describe the general education related goals of this course

In light of senior survey data (HEDS report) regarding relevant general education goals identified for this course, comment on the extent to which this course is meeting these general education requirements

Estimate the percentage of students exceeding expectations related to the general education goals for this course:

Estimate the percentage of students meeting or falling short of minimum expectations related to the general education goals for this course:

Appendix C (Form C)
Form for assessment of Science Category C courses, Creative Arts, & Int. Studies

Department Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes

Year:

Department:

General Education Requirements, pp. 12-17, College Catalog

International Studies

SQR: Cat. C - Quantitative Reasoning: Humanities and Social Sciences

Creative Arts

Course Number & Title:

Which general education requirement is met with this course?
(See list of requirements above)

Define the general education goals that comprise part of this course

Assessthe extent to which these goals are met by all students passing the course

Comment on how the achievement of general education goals in this course could be measured in the future