Annual Report for Assessment of Outcomes 2012-13

Subject Area Committee Name: Developmental Education (DE)

Contact person: Leslie Boyd (lboyd@pcc.edu)

For LDC/DE: Core outcome(s) assessed: Communication; Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

For CTE: Degree or certificate* assessed: _____

*please attach a table showing the alignment of the degree or certificate outcomes with the College Core Outcomes

Please address the questions below and send to *learningassessment@pcc.edu*
by **June 21, 2013** with Annual Report in the subject line

.*1. Describe the <u>changes that have been implemented</u> towards improving students' attainment of outcomes that <u>resulted from recent outcome assessments.</u> These may include but are not limited to changes to content, materials, instruction, pedagogy, etc. Please be sure to describe the connection between the assessment results and the changes made.*

 The DE assessment for 2011-2012 focused on Professional Competency and Self-Reflection. To measure these two outcomes, we employed a pre- and post-survey (indirect assessment) measuring students' reported attitudes and practices. After statistical analysis, it was determined that the students rated their practices and beliefs very highly, and there was some increase from the beginning to end of the term in students' reporting of these outcomes. Because this was an indirect assessment, other factors may have affected this change. Additionally, it was unclear whether the 2nd part of the assessment (intervention) had any impact on the students' achievements of these outcomes.

The second component of the 2011-2012 DE assessment was a direct intervention designed to create awareness about making connections between classes, completing homework, and other reflective, studentship practices. Students were given a brief reminder and survey every other week throughout the term. The idea behind this was that periodic reminders would help raise student awareness of the practices and values behind self-reflection and strong professionalism and they, with consistent reminders, would develop these skills. In the analysis of our data, any effect from this strategy was found to be negligible.

While recommendations were made for revision of the assessment instrument and process, there have been no programmatic changes as a result of these findings. Individually in our courses, we continue to work with students' self-reflective and professional competencies through direct, explicit instruction. For instance, one instructor shared her explicit guidelines for "how to write an email," which has become one of the first writing assignments for some students. In addition, campus-specific efforts have been employed to help students achieve these outcomes. One example is the BOOST Lab that was piloted at Sylvania campus to help struggling students carve out space and time for homework and academic assistance.

Our most exciting and promising change is to the assessment process itself. We had noticed the timetable was a burnout cycle. A small group of dedicated souls would step forward to do the lion's share of the assessment for any given year. When the year was over, a new group of dedicated individuals would select two new core outcomes to focus on and step up to take on the assessment charge. In the end, there was no time to discuss real, meaningful change to our program because once we had some data, we had to turn around and design a new assessment for two different core outcomes. There was no continuity of the work, making assessment-driven improvements nearly impossible. To address these huge stumbling blocks, we agreed to "tenure" on our assessment committee. We are recommending a three-year commitment with flexibility and we will focus on the same core outcomes for a longer cycle for sustained thought and real programmatic and curricular change. We have decided to focus on our WR 90 classes, which are our program's core.

For each outcome assessed this year:

2. Describe the assessment design (tool and processes) used. Include relevant information about:

- *The nature of the assessment (e.g., written work, project, portfolio, exam, survey, performance etc.) and if it is direct (assesses evidence mastery of outcomes) or indirect (student's perception of mastery). Please give rationale for indirect assessments (direct assessments are preferable).*

- *The student sample assessed (including sample size relative to the targeted student population for the assessment activity) process and rationale for selection of the student sample. Why was this group of students and/or courses chosen?*

- *Any rubrics, checklists, surveys or other tools that were used to evaluate the student work. (Please include with your report – OK to include in appendix). Where appropriate, identify benchmarks.*

- *How you analyzed results, including steps taken to ensure that results are reliable (consistent from one evaluator to another.*

This year, we decided to pilot a direct assessment of timed, in-class student essays written during the last weeks of Writing 90 in winter quarter 2013. We chose to assess Writing 90 because it represents the end of the DE writing sequence and the gateway to college writing. We used these essays to assess two Core Outcomes: Communication and Critical Thinking and Problem Solving. We collected essays from full- and part-time faculty volunteers at all four campuses.

Campus	Total Participants (FT/PT)	# of Sections Sampled
Sylvania	2 (2/0)	3
Cascade	3 (2/1)	3
Southeast	2 (0/2)	2
Rock Creek	3 (3/0)	3

The essays were written in response to a short expository text that we selected and a single prompt that we created. (See Appendix A). When selecting the text, we tried to find one that was simple, accessible, and equally inclusive of all student experiences. We asked instructors to allow students 60 minutes to complete the reading and essay. We also asked instructors to avoid giving students explicit instruction that might influence students' understanding of the text or key terms in the prompt like "thesis."

Participating instructors submitted 3 essays corresponding to students # 3, 11, and 17 on their rosters; in the case that a student's work was not available, the next sequential number was selected. Out of 31 sections of Writing 90 that were taught that quarter, we sampled from 11 (35%). Because this year's assessment is considered a pilot for a more thorough, broader assessment planned for 2013-14, we focused primarily on the process rather than striving for a truly valid sample size.

Our goal was to assess an unbiased sample of student writing from across the district; however, we needed instructors to devote almost an entire class period to this assessment and were unable to compel participation from a truly random sample of sections. Sections taught by both full- and part-time faculty were included in our sample, but sections taught by full-time faculty were overrepresented relative to the number of Writing 90 sections taught that quarter. Overall, full-time faculty taught 39% of the sections and part-time faculty 61%, whereas the assessment sample represented 73% full-time faculty and 27% part-time faculty.

After collecting essays, we developed an intake form to organize and track information, and we removed any information that would identify the students. A group then met to rate the student essays. Any faculty member who had given the essay in his or her class was invited to participate, as was any member of our DE Assessment Committee. Participating PT faculty were paid for their participation from both the LAC compensation to the DE SAC and from a Learning Assessment grant.

Each essay was evaluated by two raters. If the two raters assigned letter grades more than one grade apart (with one letter grade being the difference between an A and a B), a third rater scored the essay. No rater evaluated his or her own student's essay, and students' names were removed before raters saw the essays.

Our assessment tool was a Google form designed to allow raters to evaluate papers holistically as well as indicate particular qualities in the papers (organization, thesis, transitions, development, vocabulary, and conventions) that relate to course outcomes. The raters then assigned an overall grade to the essay. The committee had determined that incremental grades (pluses and minuses) rather than whole grades would help determine inter-rater reliability; even though incremental grades are not used at PCC, many instructors use them within courses. There were also boxes in which the raters could freely enter feedback on the essays. (See Appendix B.) An assessment tool designed in this way could help us achieve several objectives:

- Assess PCC Core Outcomes (Communication and Critical Thinking) by assessing qualities (such as organization, thesis, and development of content and ideas) and related to course-level outcomes.
- Assess grading consistency between instructors and campuses.
- Use results to create a rubric linking qualities of the writing with letter grades.

We exported the Google form into Excel in order to analyze the results. We noted:

- The percentage of essays that received a passing score in Core Outcome-related qualities
- Inter-rater consistency in letter grade.
- Inter-rater consistency in each individual writing quality.
- The correspondence between scores in individual writing qualities and particular letter grades.
- Factors in the free-response boxes that influenced the raters' evaluation of the essays.

After rating the essays, the group discussed and gave feedback about the process. Adjustments to consider for next year's full implementation of the assessment are detailed in sections 4 and 5.

3. Provide information about the results (i.e., what did you learn about how well students are meeting the outcomes)?
- ***If scored (e.g., if a rubric or other scaled tool is used), please report the data, and relate to any appropriate benchmarks.***
- ***Results should be broken down in a way that is meaningful and useful for making improvements to teaching/learning.   Please show those specific results.***

<u>**Assessment of Core Outcomes**</u>
Evidence of the outcomes of Communication and Critical Thinking and Problem Solving often overlap in writing. For each of the the rubric categories (and related outcomes) listed below, we have included our benchmark for passing which indicates that the outcome has been met. Rather than create a general standard for meeting (such as 2 out of 4 on a standard rubric), we described passing by qualities for each category.

Organization (Communication)
Passing scores for organization:
- *Intro, body, and conclusion function at a high level (BEST)*
- *Intro and Conclusion are distinct from body paragraphs but not well developed (VERY GOOD)*
- *Includes introduction OR conclusion AND body paragraphs (MEETING)*

Papers receiving a passing score from at least 1 rater.	**30 (91%)**
Papers receiving a passing score from at least 2 raters.	**27 (82%)**
Papers receiving the same score from at least 2 raters.	**18 (55%)**

These results indicate that inter-rater reliability was high and that at least 82% of the student samples met the outcome for at least 2 of the raters.

Thesis (Communication; Critical Thinking and Problem Solving)

Passing scores for thesis:

- *Clear, focused, and interesting. (BEST)*
- *Recognizable, but not clearly focused or expressed. (MEETING)*

Papers receiving a passing score from at least 1 rater.	32 (97%)
Papers receiving a passing score from at least 2 raters.	25 (76%)
Papers receiving the same score from at least 2 raters.	15 (45%)

These results indicate that inter-rater reliability was not as high as for Organization, but that at least 76% of the student samples met the outcome for at least 2 of the raters, and 97% were seen as meeting the outcome for at least one rater.

Development and Content (Critical Thinking and Problems Solving)

Passing scores for development and content:

- *Main points elaborated with multiple types of strong, interesting, and sometimes unexpected support. (BEST)*
- *Main points elaborated with multiple types of support, but it is vague or poorly developed at times. (MEETING)*

Papers receiving a passing score from at least 1 raters.	32 (97%)
Papers receiving a passing score from at least 2 raters.	27 (82%)
Papers receiving the same score from at least 2 raters.	18 (55%)

These results indicate that inter-rater reliability was high, that at least 82% of the student samples met the outcome for at least 2 of the raters, and that 97% met the outcome for at least one rater.

Holistic Letter Grades

Letter grades were assigned numbers as follows:

A	4.0
A-	3.66
B+	3.33
B	3.0
B-	2.66
C+	2.33
C	2.0
C-	1.66
D	1.0
F	0

Average Letter Grades Assigned By Raters

Mean grade: 2.60

Median grade: 2.66

Modal grade: 2.66

Inter-rater Consistency in Letter Grades

Of 33 total papers rated,

4 papers were 0 grades apart.
12 papers were .33 grades apart.

7 papers were .66 grades apart.
4 papers were 1.0 grade apart.
6 papers were more than 1 grade apart and required a tie breaker.
 In 3 cases, the tie breaker's grade was equal to or in between the first two grades.
In the remaining 3 cases, the tie breaker's grade was outside the range of the first two grades.

Relationship Between Individual Quality and Holistic Letter Grade

Organization
Number of papers that received the highest organization score from at least one rater: 15
Mean grade for those papers: 3.47 (between B+ and A-)
Number of papers that received the lowest organization score from at least one rater: 6
Mean for the lowest: 1.6 (between D and C-)

Thesis
Number of papers that received the highest thesis score from at least one rater: 20
Mean grade for those papers: 3.21 (B)
Papers that received lowest score from at least one rater: 3
Mean for the lowest: 1.1 (D)

Content and Development
Number of papers that received the highest development score from at least one rater: 15
Mean grade for those papers: 3.33 (B+)
Number of papers that received the lowest development score from at least one rater: 6
Mean for the lowest: 1.6 (D/C-)

Discussion in the Free Response Section
In the comment boxes of our assessment tool, readers could enter text in response to the following questions:

- *What are some of your reasons for this grade?*

- *What would the student need to do, at minimum, to get one grade higher?*

- *Are there any other qualities or issues that affected your assessment?*

We looked through responses to get a sense of qualities that influence grading besides those we allowed raters to evaluate in the check boxes. The most frequent factor discussed in the comments section was student's response to and/or integration of the article. In the entire comments section, there were 60 references to "text," "article," "quote" or "reading." This reflects different raters' interpretations of the prompt and the task: namely, were students being given the text as a general idea or was the intention to integrate the text into the essay.

Other factors mentioned were "voice" (8 references) and ESOL (3 references), highlighting different raters' inclusion of these concepts in their grading.

4. Identify any changes that should, as a result of this assessment, be implemented to help improve students' attainment of outcomes. (These may include, but are not limited to, changes in curriculum, content, materials, instruction, pedagogy etc).

Our results indicate that by the end of Writing 90, a large proportion of our students are indeed reaching the intended course outcomes for Writing 90, and that our letter grading is fairly, but not perfectly, consistent. However, our indicators of inter-rater reliability suggest that our faculty may not always have a shared way of *articulating* the qualities we're looking for in our student's writing.

Recommendations:

- Present "anchor" papers—those on which raters agreed on grades and/or qualities—to the SAC in order to facilitate consistency in grading and create a resource for new and continuing faculty.

- Recommend that the SAC to develop more consistent expectations for thesis, voice, and the response to/integration of texts in WR 90. Also, create working definitions and examples of these concepts that will provide consistency in usage of the terms.

- Initiate discussion in the SAC of the appropriate response to significant differences in students' writing skills from campus to campus (e.g., Southeast has a greater number of non-native English students, and Southeast and Cascade have a greater number of non-traditional college students) which may proportionally affect the grading at each campus. The goal would be to develop standards that can be consistently articulated and maintained across the district.

5. Reflect on the effectiveness of this assessment tool and assessment process. Please describe any changes to assessment methodology that would lead to more meaningful results if this assessment were to be repeated (or adapted to another outcome). Is there a different kind of assessment tool or process that the SAC would like to use for this outcome in the future? If the assessment tool and processes does not need to be revised, please indicate this.

Direct assessment of student writing of student writing that responded to a common text and prompt was an effective assessment of course outcomes and PCC core outcomes, and we are looking forward to a larger scale assessment of student writing in which more SAC members can participate. However, both our results and post-assessment feedback from our raters indicate that we need to make changes in the following areas:

Text, Prompt, and Collection of Writing Sample

Raters' feedback indicated that the text, while accessible, did not invite students' critical response. Its claim, that working part-time while going to college has benefits, may have seemed intuitive to many students and the supporting evidence may have seemed reasonable enough that students had little room to critically debate it. Some instructors who administered the assessment also said that the prompt did not make it sufficiently clear that students were free to disagree with the prompt and offer evidence that contradicted its claims. In the future, we will use a different, perhaps more controversial, text, and will write the prompt so that it more clearly invites students to debate the claims presented in the text.

Instructors who administered the assessment also indicated that 60 minutes wasn't enough time to complete the assessment. In the future, we will allow at least 80 minutes—the entire class period for a typical Writing 90.

Consideration should also be given to how students are prepared to write a timed, in-class essay. Practices varied widely among those who administered the assessment and may have affected how students perceived the essay's effect on their standing in the class.

Assessment Procedure

When raters evaluated papers, each rated as many as she could finish until all 33 had been evaluated. We assumed raters would read and evaluate at a similar rate; however, there turned out to be a great deal of variation in the speed with which raters evaluated papers. One rater in particular evaluated much faster than others. She completed 15 evaluations, while most raters completed around 6 and some finished as few as 3. The fast evaluator had a disproportionate role in our results. In the future, we will need to assign a fixed number of papers to each reader so that each reader has a similar role in the overall results.

Inter-rater reliability

Creating a rubric and training raters to use it would likely improve inter-rater reliability. Improvements in inter-rater reliability would, of course, give more consistent results in a larger scale direct assessment of student writing. Having a shared rubric and shared Writing 90 exit assessment could also form the foundation for a more cohesive program with clear and consistent expectations of student writing. The results of this year's pilot suggest a rubric that might privilege papers where strengths in organization, development, and response to texts outweigh weaknesses in transitions and conventions:

A	Strengths in organization, thesis, development, and response to text outweigh any minor weaknesses in transitions and conventions:
	· Introduction, body, and conclusion function at a high level.
	· Thesis is clear, focused, and interesting.
	· Main points elaborated with multiple types of strong support.
	· Writer has a strong, logical presence in the essay.
	· Refers specifically to the text at least once through accurate paraphrase or quotation.
	· Clear, varied, logical transitions used throughout -between and within paragraphs
	· Demonstrates strong use of grammatical conventions, including punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.
	· Employs a variety of sentence structures, including complex sentences.
	· Precise use of vocabulary.
B	Strengths in organization, thesis, and development outweigh clear weaknesses in those areas, or in transitions, conventions, and response to text:
	· Introduction and conclusion are distinct from body paragraphs but not well developed.
	· Thesis is recognizable, but may not be clearly focuses or expressed.
	· Main points elaborated with multiple types of support, but it may be vague or poorly developed at times.
	· Refers to the text, though the reference may be vague, broad, or tangential.
	· Logical transitions used throughout - between and within paragraphs, but they may be formulaic.
	· Punctuation, spelling, and capitalization error may occur and may sometimes detract from overall quality.
	· Sentence structures vary, but may not vary frequently.
	· Few vocabulary words are misused or inaccurate, yet they may lack variety.
C	Strengths and weaknesses are evenly balanced. The writing demonstrates basic competence in organization, thesis, and development:
	· Includes introduction OR conclusion AND body paragraphs.
	· Thesis may be vague or unclear.
	· Main points elaborated with multiple types of support, but it is vague or poorly developed at times.
	· Writer seems to be responding to the text but may not explicitly refer to it.

C	Strengths and weaknesses are evenly balanced. The writing demonstrates basic competence in organization, thesis, and development:
	· Includes introduction OR conclusion AND body paragraphs.
	· Thesis may be vague or unclear.
	· Main points elaborated with multiple types of support, but it is vague or poorly developed at times.
	· Writer seems to be responding to the text but may not explicitly refer to it.
	· Transitions are used either between or within paragraphs, but may be inconsistent.
	· Punctuation, spelling, and capitalization error may occur and may sometimes detract from overall quality.
	· Sentence structures vary, but may not vary frequently.
	· Few vocabulary words are misused or inaccurate, yet they may lack variety.
D	Writer is clearly responding to the prompt, although weaknesses outweigh strengths:
	· Introduction and conclusion are indistinguishable from body paragraphs.
	· No apparent thesis.
	· Main points are poorly supported and sometimes not supported at all.
	· There may be no indication that the writer has read the text.
	· Frequent punctuation, spelling, and capitalization errors that greatly detract from overall

Coordination and Alignment

As we move toward a larger scale direct assessment next year, we will look for opportunities to coordinate our efforts with those of other SACs (ABE/GED, ESOL, and Comp/Lit) in order to ensure the alignment of our courses.

Appendix A

Why a part-time job can pay off

By Janie Barnett and Myrtle Ching-Rappa
Times Higher Education, 11 July 2003

Working on campus can enhance degree study, say Janie Barnett and Myrtle Ching-Rappa

As fees rise and grants and scholarships decline, students must borrow more or work more to meet the cost of attending college. In particular, those from lower-income backgrounds tend to take on part-time jobs, driven by the fear of being unable to repay their loans. Today, more than 70 per cent of US college students work, while the proportion in the UK is also rising.

But is this a bad thing?

There has been much in the press about the harmful effects of student employment. But studies have shown positive and negative effects. It seems that working can increase a student's determination to graduate and boost their academic performance. But too many hours spent at work can take its toll.

It is generally agreed that students learn transferable skills through part-time work. These include promptness and regular attendance, time management, problem solving, teamwork and cooperation, organisational skills and work ethic. They also develop relationships with employers and co-workers that can result in work references and mentoring.

A study of students aged 13 to 20 years old, carried out by Stephen Heyneman, professor of international education policy at Vanderbilt University, Tennessee, confirms that teenagers who work are better able to use their time wisely, have higher levels of motivation and more self-esteem. Heyneman concludes that despite gaining lower academic scores, Americans are more productive because as working teenagers they learn teamwork and can adapt to employment more easily then workers from other countries.

Alexander Astin, director of the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles, defines student involvement as "the quality and quantity of physical and psychological energy that the student invests in the college experience". He says working on campus can enhance the college experience, especially if the work is related to the student's field.

Research by Vincent Tinto, professor at the School of Education at Syracuse University, New York, found that dropout rates were lower for those students working part time on campus.

Positive results have been found in other studies. Gordon Van der Water, higher education project manager with the Education Commission of the States, found that work does not impair academic performance. In fact working ten to 20 hours every week improves performance and persistence, while those working fewer hours enjoy a smaller boost. Similar results were found in separate studies conducted by Central Missouri State University and National Association of Student Employment Association with Cornell University, New York.

Astin also conducts annual surveys of the incoming freshman year and their expectations of college. A majority of those surveyed say that they are attending college to find a good job. Employers indicate that

transferable skills and work experience are just as important as grades.

If students are considered the "clients" on a college campus, then universities should provide more mentoring for undergraduates - not just graduate students - and more flexible curricula that can accommodate work schedules. Employers need to be more open to hiring students while they are still studying in order to produce a well-educated workforce. Employability should be the joint responsibility of universities and the community.

We can't stop students from working. So we must improve the type of work they do, or make it more relevant to academics to maximize work-based learning. Students should be given the chance to learn about the world of work and develop accurate expectations about their chosen career.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Write an **essay** that supports your thesis about students working while going to college. Use the information presented in the article as well as your own personal experience, observation, and awareness of current issues to support your ideas.

Appendix B

WR 90 Assessment Norming

For each category, check the most accurate description(s) of the essay you are evaluating.
* Required

Paper ID *

Reviewer Name *

Thesis *
- ☐ Clear, focused, and interesting
- ☐ Recognizable, but not clearly focused or expressed
- ☐ Vague and unclear
- ☐ No thesis

Introduction, Body, and Conclusion *
- ☐ Intro, body, and conclusion function at a high level
- ☐ Intro and Conclusion are distinct from body paragraphs but not well developed
- ☐ Includes introduction OR conclusion AND body paragraphs
- ☐ Introduction and conclusion are indistinguishable from body paragraphs

Transitions and Paragraphs *
- ☐ Clear, varied, logical transitions used throughout –between and within paragraphs
- ☐ Formulaic yet logical transitions used throughout – between and within paragraphs
- ☐ Some transitions used but inconsistent – either between or within paragraphs
- ☐ Transitions used but lack logical relationship
- ☐ No apparent transitions used

Development of Content and Ideas *
- ☐ Main points elaborated with multiple types of strong, interesting, and sometimes unexpected support
- ☐ Main points elaborated with multiple types of support, but it is vague or poorly developed at times.
- ☐ Main points are poorly supported and sometimes not supported at all

Conventions *
- ☐ Demonstrates strong use of grammatical conventions, including punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.
- ☐ Punctuation, spelling, and capitalization errors occur and sometimes detract from overall quality
- ☐ Frequent punctuation, spelling, and capitalization errors that greatly detract from overall quality
- ☐ Employs a variety of sentence structures, including complex sentences
- ☐ Sentence structures vary, but not frequently

☐ Sentence structures are simplistic and lack variety
☐ Precise use of vocabulary
☐ Few vocabulary words are misused or inaccurate, yet they lack variety
☐ Vocabulary words are misused and impede reader understanding.

What grade would you give this paper ? *
☐ A
☐ A-
☐ B+
☐ B
☐ B-
☐ C+
☐ C
☐ C-
☐ D
☐ F

What are some of your reasons for this grade? *

What would the student need to do, at minimum, to get one grade higher? *

Are there any other qualities or issues that affected your assessment? *

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