

Annual Report for Assessment of Outcomes 2012-13

Subject Area Committee Name: History

Contact person: Robert Flynn, Charlie Presti, Sylvia Gray

For LDC/DE: Core outcome(s) assessed: Critical Thinking, Cultural Awareness, Community and Environmental Awareness, Communication (see below for explanation)

For CTE: Degree or certificate* assessed: _____

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

Note: Information provided in this report may be inserted into or summarized in Section 2C Program Review Outline.

1. Describe changes that have been implemented towards improving students' attainment of outcomes that resulted from recent outcome assessments. 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 reassessment of the Critical Thinking Outcome appears to indicate that our inclusion of outcomes on the assignments helped improve student learning. All History SAC members in Fall 2013 will continue what was started here by explicitly writing outcomes associated with all major assignments.

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).
 - [Note: We are also including aspects of #3 in this section.]

Process and Rationale:

In order to avoid assignment/outcome mismatching and to simplify the group assessment process, we paired the following outcomes and split the courses into Group A and Group B (the rubrics are shown below):

- Group A: Western Civ and other 100-level courses were to focus on the course outcomes:

- *Use critical thinking in order to evaluate historical changes and their impact on [western or other] civilization* [This course outcome is mapped to the College Core Outcome: Critical Thinking]
- *Identify the influence of culturally-based practices, values, and beliefs to assess how historically defined meanings of difference affect human behavior.* [This course outcome is mapped to the College Core Outcome: Cultural Awareness].
- Group B: U.S. History and other 200-level courses were to focus on the outcomes:
 - *Connect the past with the present to enhance citizenship skills* [This course outcome is mapped to the College Core Outcome: Community and Environmental Awareness].
 - *Communicate effectively using historical analysis* [This course outcome is mapped to the College Core Outcome: Communication].
- In each group, one of two outcomes had already been assessed last year: Critical Thinking or Community and Environmental Awareness. We thought this could provide some comparison, although the rubrics now in use are revised and the assignments better targeted, so the comparison will not correlate 100%. Assignments were to explicitly state the course outcome correlated to the PCC Core Outcome.

All assignments were checked to ensure that the assignment correlated with the outcome being assessed.

In Group A - 100-level courses, we collected 224 total artifacts, and we selected from those 50 to assess. 45 papers were given a composite grade; 25 artifacts in the Critical Thinking category were assessed for each category, and 35 artifacts were assessed for Cultural Awareness. The results will be given for both below.

In Group B - 200-level courses, we collected 60 total artifacts, and we assessed 50 of them.

On April 30, 2013, seven full-time and eight part-time faculty members participated in the learning assessment exercise. We divided the readers into groups of two, each of whom would assess artifacts from either Group A or B. Each reader assigned scores to papers, and we only reassessed if there was a spread of more than one point between assessors on each artifact. We added all scores and then calculated percentages.

In all cases, the nature of the assessment was written work and system of assessment was direct. See below for the number of artifacts included for each assessment, the rubrics, and the results by percentage, with commentary.

Critical Thinking Rubric [applied to Group A]

- Use critical thinking in order to evaluate historical changes and their impact on [the subject of this course].

	Exceptional (1)	Proficient (2)	Insufficient (3)
Summary of primary and/or secondary sources	Clearly identifies and summarizes the key ideas and concepts in the source material 43%	Generally but inconsistently identifies and summarizes the main ideas and concepts in the source material 57%	Fails to identify or to summarize effectively the sources 0%
Analysis of primary and/or secondary sources	Clearly analyzes the sources using historical methods of analysis, and demonstrates their significance 37%	Generally but inconsistently analyzes the sources using historical methods of analysis, and demonstrates some of their significance 59%	Fails to analyze the sources or to demonstrate their significance 4%
Ability to develop an interpretation using evidence to support it	Develops a comprehensive interpretation of the evidence and successfully supports it 24%	Provides some analysis of the evidence but lacks a coherent interpretation 76%	Fails to develop an interpretation of the evidence 15%

The composite analysis [see explanation above] designated 38% of students in the “strong” category, 47% in the “emerging,” and 15% in “insufficient.”

Comments:

As could be expected, the summary skills of students are highest, analysis second, and interpretation, third, as they represent progressively challenging skill sets. In each case, the bulk of students fell into the “emerging category,” especially in the “interpretation” category. Only 4% of the students fell into the “insufficient” category of those broken into categories.

Cultural Awareness Rubric [applied to Group A]

- Identify the influence of culturally-based practices, values, and beliefs to assess how historically defined meanings of difference affect human behavior.

	Strong	Emerging	Weak
Cultural Awareness	Demonstrates a strong awareness of how culturally-based assumptions influence perceptions, behaviors, and policies. 35%	Demonstrates some awareness of how culturally-based assumptions influence perceptions, behaviors, and policies. 40%	Demonstrates little awareness of how culturally-based assumptions influence perceptions, behaviors, and policies. 25%
Historical Bases of Cultural Ideas	Exhibits a clear grasp of the historical bases and evolution of diverse cultural ideas, behaviors, and issues. 16%	Exhibits some understanding of the historical bases and evolution of diverse cultural ideas, behaviors, and issues. 51%	Exhibits little understanding of the historical bases and evolution of diverse cultural ideas, behaviors, and issues. 26%

The composite analysis [see explanation above] designated 16% of students in the “strong” category, 67% in the “emerging,” and 17% in “insufficient.”

Comments:

In the assessments which were broken down by category, students received higher scores for “Awareness” than for the “Bases.” As expected, the bulk of students fit in the “emerging” category. It is still somewhat challenging for us to see that 25-26% of the students fit in the “weak” category – and this is something we need to focus on in the next year.

Communication Rubric [applied to Group B]

- Communicate effectively using historical analysis

	Strong	Emerging	Weak
Argument	Essay clearly and consistently focuses on the assigned question, and makes a strong, well-organized historical argument. 13%	Essay generally but inconsistently addresses the question posed, and makes a pretty good historical argument. 49%	Essay does not focus on the question posed, and either fails to make an historical argument or includes one that is not pertinent to the assignment. 38%
Use of Supporting Materials	Provides abundant and pertinent secondary- or primary-source evidence that effectively sustains the essay's argument. 8%	Makes use of some relevant secondary- or primary-source evidence, but does so inconsistently or sporadically. 53%	Makes use of little or no secondary- or primary-source evidence. 39%
Syntax and Organization	Essay is gracefully and straightforwardly written with few or no grammatical errors and has a clear and effective organizational scheme; prose effectively and clearly conveys meaning to the reader. 14%	Essay is generally well written and organized, but has some grammatical, organizational, and stylistic errors that may impede the reader's ability to grasp the writer's points. 46%	Essay lacks an effective system of organization and has many grammatical and stylistic errors that obscure the author's ideas. 40%

Comments:

Very few students fell into the “strong” category, and about 39% fit into the “weak” category – across the board. Approximately 50% were “emerging,” and where this may be reasonable for students at the 200-level, we need to focus on these areas to improve outcomes going forward.

Community and Environment Rubric [applied to Group B]

- Connect the past with the present to enhance citizenship skills

	Exceptional (1)	Proficient (2)	Insufficient (3)
Ability to recognize historical patterns	Student demonstrates an advanced understanding of specific historical patterns and how the past relates to the present. 10%	Student demonstrates an emerging awareness that specific historical patterns exist, and that the past relates to the present. 50%	Student fails to demonstrate any awareness that historical patterns exist, and that the past relates to the present. 40%
Ability to think critically about the relationships between past and present events and issues	Student demonstrates an excellent comprehension of the connections between the past, present, and future. 16%	Student exhibits a basic awareness of the connections between past and present but lacks critical analysis 39%	Student fails to develop an understanding of how past events and issues affect the present 45%

Comments:

The bulk of students fit into the emerging category, but 40% and 45% fit within the “insufficient” category. We need to focus on improving student awareness of patterns in history which enable understanding of how contemporary issues can be related to past events.

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.

Reflection and Discussion:

[Note: Some of the information requested here is included in the answer to the previous question.]

There is a major challenge with learning assessment for the History SAC. One is that we do not offer sequences, so any student who has met the basic prerequisites for lower division collegiate courses may enroll in any course. When we assess students, we have no way of telling whether a student is taking his or her first or fifth history course.

When carefully comparing the rubrics to the matrices correlating to the College Core Outcomes, it appears that although in many years past the History SAC had designated all categories (except Professional Competency) as “4”s, these are rather aspirational goals (which we still hold) but may be unrealistic to assess for in students at the 100- and 200-level in history. In addition, the Lumina Foundation has been working on defining Degree Qualification Profiles (DQP), addressing the issue that there has not been a nation-wide standard for various levels of student achievement. From a cursory scan, Level 4 on the PCC matrices are, as mentioned above, aspirational and at best a more fitting description of achievement at a bachelor’s degree level, but not readily applicable to the community college level.

Additionally, in the rubrics the History SAC used to assess students (see above), a “strong” student would be approaching a level “4” and an “emerging” student would correlate with a “3.” Therefore, students achieving a “3” would be working at a reasonable level and are prepared to continue their growth by continuing on to a four-year program.

The items that stand out are the percentage of “Insufficients” in Communication and Community and Environment.

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).

- The reassessment of Critical Thinking Outcome appears to indicate that our inclusion of outcomes on the assignments helped improve student learning. All History SAC members in Fall 2013 will continue what was started here by explicitly writing outcomes associated with all major assignments.
- In the same vein, the History SAC has also agreed to add rubrics to all major assignments, beginning in Fall 2013, that are keyed to our outcomes.
- The reassessment of the Community and Environment Outcome indicated that few instructors have seen this as a priority as presently constructed. The History SAC will discuss whether to revise the outcome to more accurately reflect our practice, change the level on the matrix, or make a concerted effort to focus on writing better-assessable assignments (see the following bullets).
- The History SAC will re-evaluate the expected levels of achievement with regard to the PCC matrix associated with the College Core Outcomes.
- A History SAC subcommittee will begin work on rewriting course outcomes to better describe course goals as well as to better correlate with College Core Outcomes, while keeping them discipline specific.
- The History SAC has committed to work on establishing a History Focus Award. While there are many motives for this, it touches on learning assessment in that we may be able to include a more targeted assessment component for those self-designated as potentially continuing on to a four-year program in history. There are various ways in which this may be configured, but one possible approach is to require a portfolio of student work which can then be compared to the general history student population. While not an infallible comparison, it would still

indicate, hopefully, that students who have taken several history courses are achieving higher levels of sophistication.

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.

In the Learning Assessment Council peer feedback received from our 2012 assessment, when we had assessed the College Core Outcomes of Critical Thinking and Community and Environmental Awareness, it was recommended that the History SAC:

- Increase the sample size of papers assessed
- Implement SAC-wide changes, rather than individual changes
- Match outcomes/rubrics with artifacts more closely.

Indeed, on that latter point, we ourselves had concluded that our assessment would be more authentic if we chose to collect assignments more specifically targeted toward the individual outcomes we were assessing. In most of the assignments, the course core outcomes were listed.

In response to the recommendations:

- We increased the sample sizes of papers assessed:
 - In Critical Thinking, from 26 artifacts last year, we instead collected 224 artifacts and assessed 50 of that number. We also assessed this group of papers for Cultural Awareness.
 - In Community and Environmental Responsibility, from 24 artifacts last year, we instead collected 60 artifacts and assessed 50 of that number. We also assessed this group of papers for Communication.
- We implemented SAC-wide changes in that the course outcomes correlating to PCC Core Outcomes were explicitly stated on the assignments to be assessed.
- We matched outcomes/rubrics with artifacts more closely. The instructor overseeing the collection of assignments checked each assignment for correlation between the assignment and the outcome being assessed.