

0Annual Report for Assessment of Outcomes – R Religion (For Degree, Certificate or Core Outcomes)

To complete this Assessment Report, please address the questions below, and send to learningassessment@pcc.edu **by June 20, 2011**; subject line: REPORT Assessment [SAC]

1. Describe changes that have been implemented towards improving students' attainment of outcomes that resulted from outcome assessments carried out in the previous academic year.

(Information provided here may be referenced, inserted into or summarized in Program Review 2.C.iii (for Core Outcomes) or 6.B.iii (for CTE Degree and Certificate outcomes).

In 10-11, all SACs should have reported on the Critical Thinking Core Outcome. Were any changes to content, materials, pedagogy, etc made as a result?

No assessment was done in 09-10, so there was nothing to report. We did include Critical Thinking along with the two Core Outcomes for 10-11, so that we could include our assessment in relation to possible changes for 11-12.

2. Identify the outcomes assessed this year, and describe the methods used.
What were the results of the assessment (i.e., what did you learn about how well students are meeting the outcomes)?

(Information provided here may be referenced, inserted into or summarized in Program Review 2.C.i& ii (for Core Outcomes) or 6.B.i & ii (for CTE Degree and Certificate outcomes)

a. Describe the method(s) you used.

b. Tied with CG

Include relevant information about:

- The students (how many, where in your program (one class, a group of classes, end of degree?)
- The nature of the assessment (written work, project, exam, performance task, observation etc).
- How was the assessment evaluated?

Religious Studies functions under the Humanities SAC. However, we chose to assess just the R 210 (World Religions) classes, as this is a relatively new subject area at PCC, and now has enough sections to make assessment of the classes meaningful. There are no full-time Religious Studies faculty, so the assessment was carried out by two part-time faculty. The two other part-time faculty teaching the class were invited to participate, but declined to do so. Did they refuse to have their classes assessed or help with assessing the students?

The assessment was done in four of the seven sections of R 210 in the Winter Quarter- were the classes randomly done?. About 100 students were involved in the assessment activity. The classes involved included two at Sylvania, one at Rock Creek and one at Cascade.

The assessment was done by giving the students a brief scenario, which asked them to imagine they were planning the next World Parliament of Religions. They were to come up with three worship practices that

could be honored at the Parliament, as well as suggesting issues that might arise in trying to carry out the activity and the importance of the issues. We did not presume the classes necessarily covered the actual Parliament, but depended on the instructor to set some context for the students around what such a Parliament involves. The students were given the same scenario in the first and last weeks of the quarter.

Three simple rubrics were devised for use by the instructors in rating the short papers the students produced. The rubrics (appended at the end of this report as a separate file) covered Communication, Critical Thinking and Problem-solving and Cultural Awareness. The two instructors whose classes were assessed met to norm the rubrics and rate the students performance. We used a random selection of 10 examples from the beginning of the term, and 10 from the end, and assessed each example according to each of the three rubrics. Sample of a sample is bad, but given the participants, better than nothing! Were the students the same students – as comparing growth? Were students identified by name?

b. Results: What did you learn?

How well did your students do? Do the assessment results match your aspirations for your students? Did your assessment indicate any areas or aspects in which student achievement could be better?

(If your assessment was scored in some way, it would be helpful to report some of that information. Scores that can be taken apart into meaningful components are often helpful in determining areas that might need attention.)

As shown by the rubrics, we scored each piece of work on a scale from 0-4 for each element, 0 indicating that the element was non-existent, 4 meaning that it was fully present and well-developed. We went through a norming exercise with two pieces of work, which were not included in the assessment. More might be helpful with a range of student work (say 1-2 of each level, with a couple more on hand).

For Communication, the highest possible ranking was 12. The range of scores for the first round was 1-12, with an mean score of 6.9. At the end of the term, the range was 4-12, with a mean score of 8.6, a gain of 1.7 points in the mean. Initially, half the scores were below 6; by the end of the term, only one was. We interpret this to mean that students grew in their ability to express concepts in Religious Studies in writing.

For Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving, the highest possible ranking was 8. The range of scores for the first round was 0-12, while the range at the end of the term was 1-7. More importantly, though, the mean score at the beginning was 3.8, while at the end it was 4.1. This indicates some a small increase in the ability to think critically around issues in Religious Studies. Did they find that some of the rubric levels were worse than others?

For Cultural Awareness, the highest possible ranking was 12. For the first round, the range was 0-12, with the mean at 5.8; by the end of the term, the range was 1-12, with a mean of 8.1, an increase of 2.3. At the beginning of the term, half the scores were less than 6. By the end of the term, only 1 was.

3. Identify any changes that should, as a result of this assessment, be implemented towards improving students' attainment of outcomes.

4.

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This is an important part of what is expected as a result of assessment. It is not enough to say “we are doing great”. We are expected to be self-examining, and curious about what we might do better.

Our results were not a great surprise. Given the nature of World Religions, we anticipated the greatest gains would be in Cultural Awareness. The increase in Communication skill was also expected. The much lower increase in Critical Thinking probably reflects the fact that the course is more focused on introducing students to various religions than it is on looking at issues related to them, although the need to think critically around issues of religious practice and tolerance of various beliefs certainly is touched on in the classes.

Given that this was our first attempt at discipline-level assessment, several points about the assessment itself were immediately apparent. The very low scores came from students who appeared to not take the exercise seriously. Since it was made clear that the exercise was not related to grading, some students seemed to think it didn't matter if they provided thoughtful answers. This leads us to believe we either need to reframe how we approach assessment, or allow students who find the idea to be too much of a bother to not submit anything at all; a poorly done artifact due to lack of interest on the part of a student does not help us determine where we need to improve. Possible to incorporate the assignment as a part of the course?

It also seemed to us that some students were taking the class without actually having completed the pre-requisites (based on the quality of writing). The new system that keeps students out will probably make a difference in that area in the future. We also determined that the instructions with the exercise were ambiguous, and that the exercise itself needed more information to help the students have context for their answers. And students needed to be specifically told to write their answers in fully developed paragraphs, if that's what we were looking for (which it was).

As for what the assessment will do for how the classes are taught—at least for the two who participated—we plan to find ways to introduce more opportunities for students to think critically about issues around religion, and to consider what they might suggest for ways to mediate conflict among religions. We'll continue as we have in the area of presenting the religions we cover, as it was evident students were gaining a good grasp on them. And we'll continue working on helping the students learn the vocabulary for discussing religions—again, beyond that, we'll see what kind of difference the new enforcement of pre-requisites makes in the work students produce before deciding that we need to do more than that on communication.