CHC Outcomes Newsletter
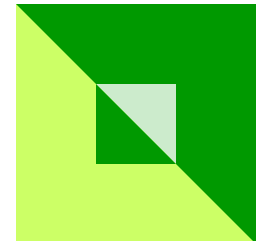
The Emerald on the Hill
40 years
CRAFTON HILLS COLLEGE

Assessing Effective Web Design Skills

Margaret Yau, Computer Information Systems

Margaret Yau, Assistant Professor of Computer Information Systems, is educating the next generation of web designers.   Her CIS 111: Web Programming and Design Class is designed to cultivate the basic understandings of web construction and develop the technical know-how to succeed in today's online environment.   In this course, students are expected to have the following technical knowledge and skills:

Spotlight on Excellence in Assessment at CHC

- Create a well-formed HTML document, including the required HTML tags (head, title, body)
- Link to an external style sheet.
- Use common HTML elements including headings, div containers, horizontal rules, paragraphs, and images.
- Create hyperlinks to internal and external web pages.

She assessed these expectations as a web project that comprised a portion of her mid-term exam. "The assessment activity was a straight-forward translation from the technical knowledge and skills I expect students to obtain in this class into action items that they have to perform in the assessment."

To evaluate student work, Margaret developed a criterion-based grading checklist that awarded point values on a scale of 0 to 4, based on how well students met each criterion. She created a benchmark that 80% of her class would meet all criteria with a score of 3 or 4. "I analyzed the results to see if the benchmark I set was met, as well as to find out the items with which students had difficulties."

Her assessment produced useful results for herself as her students. In Spring 2011, out of the 14 specification items on which students were assessed, there were 11 items in which 80% of students were able to implement correctly using HTML by scoring a 3 or 4 on the scoring rubric. "I found out the three items in which students did not perform satisfactorily. In response, I placed more focus on those items, and spending more focused class time on putting special characters on a web page as well as assigning an HTML element to a class and ID."

She reassessed in Fall 2011 and the results were improved from the spring. Students passed all criteria save for one – including an image with a specified ID. "Assigning an element an ID appears to be a difficult concept to students, and therefore, I will place more attention into helping students learn how to assign an ID to an HTML element."

As for her future plans, Professor Yau plans to assess the integration of the technical skills of web design and construction with the collaborative process of designing a website for a potential user or customer. "A range of non-technical and technical skills are involved, and I want to work towards evaluating student performance in these diverse skills in a way that is meaningful for both the students and me."

What is Assessment, Anyway?

Keith Wurtz

Thomas Angelo, best-known for his co-authored publication with K. Patricia Cross, *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*, defines assessment as the following:

> …an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance. When it is embedded effectively within larger institutional systems, assessment can help us focus our collective attention, examine our assumptions, and create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education.

To have an effective approach towards assessment, faculty, staff, and managers need to develop a balanced approach that includes both direct and indirect assessment measures. Direct measures are assessments that ask students to demonstrate knowledge and skills they have obtained in the course. Some examples of direct measures include exams, papers, quizzes, portfolios, and simulations. Indirect measures are assessments that ask students to think about the learning that took place in the course. Indirect measure assessments may consist of course evaluations, tracking the number of hours students spend at faculty office hours, or responses on a survey that measures concepts like critical thinking or student engagement.

When choosing an assessment instrument for their SLO (student learning outcome), faculty must remember that they are the ones who should select it and that there are no specific requirements for their courses or programs. An important question to ask when selecting an assessment is "Will the results from this assessment help me to understand and improve student learning?" If the answer is "no," then you should use a different assessment. One of the simplest assessment tools that can be used for SLO assessment is called the embedded assessment. Embedded assessment occurs within the regular class or curricular activity. Instructors can use class assignments linked to student learning outcomes to measure whether or not their criterion for success is being met. Individual questions on exams can be embedded in numerous classes to provide department, program, or institutional assessment information. Determining an assessment tool is one of the most challenging parts of the SLO assessment process. For information on different types of assessment tools please contact the Instructional Assessment Specialist, the Office of Research and Planning, or navigate to the Crafton SLO Web Site on designing assessments.
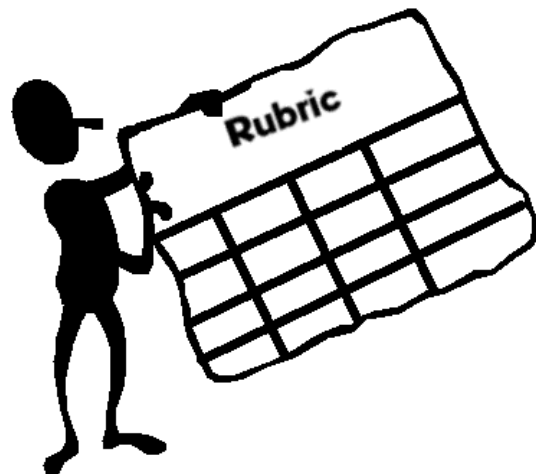
The Assessment Process and Student Learning Outcomes

Bob O'Toole & Catherine Hendrickson

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's) are a natural part of the function of educators in effectively providing a greater level of knowledge, skills, and abilities for student-learners. SLO's are used to define the answers to the following questions: (1) What do we want students to learn? (2) What do we want students to take away from instruction? Measuring student learning outcomes and assessing the results of the measurements are essential steps in the process of using learning outcomes effectively. Educators need to know whether the learning outcomes were accomplished; and, if so, how the accomplishment was demonstrated. Appropriate changes are made to courses as a result of the assessment process.

This same assessment process is followed in day-to-day activities. Since holiday memories are still fresh, a turkey being cooked for the Thanksgiving meal can be used to demonstrate the assessment process. As the cook begins the process of preparing a turkey during the early morning hours of Thanksgiving Thursday, the objectives are to have a hot, moist, and tasty turkey ready for dinner by 2:00 in the afternoon. Establishing the objectives is step 1 in the outcome process.

Throughout the day, the cook uses a combination of a thermometer and visual observations to check and re-check the progress of the roasting turkey. This is assessment. The thermometer and the observations are the means of the assessment - step 2 in the assessment process. The cook compares the results with pre-established criteria. The criteria may be temperatures listed in a cookbook or past experiences with the process of cooking a turkey. This is step 3 of the assessment process. As appropriate, more water and other ingredients are added to the turkey to ensure it is on course to becoming hot, moist, and tasty by 2:00.

Finally, based on the evidence (step 4 of the assessment process), the cooking is complete and the time has arrived for the meal. The turkey is carved and served for the enjoyment of the guests. The hoped for results would be a hot, moist, turkey leading to praise, satisfied looks on the faces of the guests, and a nap upon completion of the meal. If the results are not achieved, the cook re-assesses the cooking process and makes appropriate changes to the process for the next time a turkey is cooked. This is step 5 of the assessment process.

Educators continuously engage in this assessment process with student-learners. For instance, creation of five basic financial reports is a fundamental requirement of the accounting process. Based on results from an embedded quiz question, students did not retain knowledge of the five basic financial reports between the end of ACCT 208 and the beginning of ACCT 209. As a result, greater emphasis is now placed on the financial reports in ACCT 208 with a follow-up day of review on the first day of class in ACCT 209. As a result of these activities, students now have a better retention rate and a better understanding of the requirements of these five financial reports.

Assessment is a natural process. Educators have been assessing student-learners from the beginning of the education process. The assessment process adopted by Crafton Hills College is merely a more formal statement of the assessment process used continuously by the faculty and staff for more than forty years.

The Road Ahead: Meeting the ACCJC Standard for Proficiency in Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

Gary J. Williams, Co-chair

Starting in Fall 2012, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) will begin evaluating member institutions on their progress in meeting a level of institution-wide PROFICIENCY in the assessment of student learning outcomes, and using the results in the continuous improvement of student learning and success.   While the standards that govern the implantation of student learning outcomes have been in place since 2002, the Commission has worked with its member institutions to create time-sensitive guidelines to ensuring that institutions have the opportunity to put outcomes and appropriate measures into place. To assist institutions, the ACCJC published the **Rubric For Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness** that includes criteria for meeting commission standards for Planning, Program Review, and Student Learning Outcomes. The portion of the rubric that describes SLO Proficiency and Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement is provided below.

How does this affect Crafton Hills College going forward? Starting in the Fall, CHC must demonstrate full compliance with the standard of PROFICIENCY, as described below. All member institutions, including CHC, will be asked to complete a report to ACCJC in the fall demonstrating that the standard of proficiency is fully met.   Institutions that do not meet Proficiency will be subject to follow-up action from ACCJC, which could include being placed on sanction.

The Outcomes Committee, in cooperation with the Senate bodies and the Crafton Council, will be putting an Institutional Assessment Plan into practice to coordinate our institution wide efforts to ensure that Outcomes and assessments are integrated into our overall institutional effectiveness process.

Crafton's next 6-year Self-evaluation cycle will occur in Fall 2014. By this time, member institutions (including CHC) will be expected to meet the Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement level, described below.

Proficiency **(By Fall 2012)**	• Student learning outcomes and authentic assessment are in place for courses, programs and degrees. • There is widespread institutional dialogue about the results of assessment and identification of gaps. • Decision-making includes dialogue on the results of assessment and is purposefully directed toward aligning institution-wide practices to support and improve student learning. • Appropriate resources continue to be allocated and fine-tuned. • Comprehensive assessment reports exist and are completed and updated on a regular basis. • Course student learning outcomes are aligned with degree student learning outcomes. • Students demonstrate awareness of goals and purposes of courses and programs in which they are enrolled.
Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement **(By Fall 2014)**	• Student learning outcomes and assessment are ongoing, systematic and used for continuous quality improvement. • Dialogue about student learning is ongoing, pervasive and robust. • Evaluation of student learning outcomes processes. • Evaluation and fine-tuning of organizational structures to support student learning is ongoing. • Student learning improvement is a visible priority in all practices and structures across the college. • Learning outcomes are specifically linked to program reviews.