

Assessment Summaries 2009: Language, Literature & Communication Division

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Note. The LLC Division consists of 3 departments: English (Writing, Literature), Speech & Communication Studies (including Forensics), and Languages (French, Spanish, Chinuk Wawa). Each department has a separate assessment plan, noted below.

1. Describe program review processes that inform your division's efforts to improve program or discipline student learning outcomes.

A. Speech & Communication Studies

The Speech & Communication Studies Department began a three-part project for assessing its Basic Communication course, Speech 100, in 2006. Speech 100 is the highest enrolled of the five speech courses meeting the Oral Communication/Rhetoric requirement of the Foundational Skills for the AAOT Degree. Approximately 36 Speech 100 sections are offered annually with a maximum enrollment of 25 students per class (a hybrid section allows 30 students). The course is offered in online and hybrid modalities, as well as face-to face formats, providing students options for access and modality.

The faculty used Guidelines for Assessment from their professional organization, the National Communication Association, to develop a project that assesses knowledge, affect, and performance. The faculty has completed two parts of the three-part project: (1) A pre-/post-test assessment of students' understanding of course content and (2) a questionnaire, qualitatively analyzed to provide information on students' experience, such as the course's relevance to their personal, social, and professional communication applications. The third part of the project, a performance assessment of their public speaking component of the course, is underway. Faculty have developed a list of key competencies to be incorporated in a rubric; they plan to pilot the performance assessment in 2009/10.

In addition to the formal assessment of Speech 100, the Communication faculty also completed a comprehensive review of the certification requirements for each course in the department and revised the list of faculty certified to teach each course.

B. Writing

Writing 121 offers more sections than any other course at Lane. In 2008-09, 110 sections of this course were offered, each with a maximum capacity of 24 students. It is a required course not only for the AAOT, but also for most transfer degrees and many Career/Technical programs. The course is offered in online and traditional face-to-face class formats.

Writing 121 has been the subject of a number of survey efforts since 2006, asking students and WR faculty to report on a range of issues, such as student satisfaction, student perception of alignment of course with outcomes, instructor review of outcomes, and more. This information has been used in ongoing curriculum discussions in specially-focused faculty meetings. For 2008-09, the Composition Coordinator organized a blind collection of student essays for an assessment project on scoring and norming the values assigned the writing samples based on criteria representing the student learning outcomes for WR 121. Because most faculty use a diverse set of textbooks—and a few rely exclusively on handouts and other materials—the student learning outcomes are achieved through multiple support materials as well as through different modalities.

From approximately 400 letters sent to WR 121 students, 35 usable essays were received. In assessing the 35 essays, the faculty met several times to discuss their evaluation of the essays across 8 criteria. Two of the essays were rated similarly across all criteria; most were rated similarly across some, and dissimilarly across other criteria. In discussions we noted that some faculty saw the task as rating the essay against outcomes, others saw the task as akin to grading a student paper; we also noted that the assignments turned in represented a range of different writing purposes/types and so were difficult to norm. Also, the lack of hierarchy in the rubric was problematic to some of the faculty evaluators.

The WR 121 curriculum is currently in a state of change across Oregon. In state institutions, the WR 121 curriculum has been mandated particular changes in the last year from the JBAC. In response, campus representatives from OWEAC (which is comprised of OUS writing educators) have been working with college/university writing departments to implement new requirements around information literacy and the use of sources/citation in the WR 121 curriculum which must be in place by 2012. This immediate mandate has affected our program assessment work, as we continue to focus efforts to meet the mandate through work with the library and the change in the WR 121 outcomes. However, the inclusion of 2 new learning outcomes in the curriculum has also allowed us the opportunity for more extended discussions about integrating the new outcomes into the existing ones.

C. Languages

The Language Department is responsible for first and second year courses in Spanish, French, and Chinuk Wawa (a NW Indian language taught through IP Video). French and Spanish courses are 5 credits/course (conversation classes are 3 credits) and are taught only in face-to-face modality, although some courses use Moodle for document archiving and to allow the College Now students centralized information.

The French Department has recently reviewed and adopted a textbook with online components and resources for first and second year French. The Spanish Department has reviewed a comprehensive textbook for second year and is in the process of developing materials to supplement it and implement it for 2009-10. The Spanish faculty is engaged in ongoing development of their faculty-authored first year course.

The French Department regularly surveys its end-of-year students to determine which first year students will continue to second year and their level of satisfaction with the program, and which second year students will continue their language study when they transfer.

In Spring 2009, both Spanish and French Departments worked with Avant Assessment to administer a nationally-normed standardized language test to their 103 and 203 (end of first and second year) students.

Chinuk Wawa has been developing materials in conjunction with the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, where there is expertise on the language and an immersion school exists for young children. Chinuk Wawa is a 4 credit course taught from Lane and Grand Ronde, with offerings at PSU and Chemeketa. The overseer of the course is head of the Northwest Indian Language Institute at UO and this year has been concentrating developing second year curriculum in alignment with state language standards.

2. Based on assessments of program or discipline outcomes, what changes have been implemented since 2004 to increase student success and improve student learning?

A. Speech & Communication Studies

Up to this point in the assessment project, there have been valuable discussions about the curriculum, and individual instructors have been free to make adjustments to their courses based on the assessment. However a more formal review of the curriculum awaits the completion of all three elements of the assessment project (est. 2012).

B. Writing

The 2008-09 Writing project is a pilot effort and has allowed an analysis of a number of elements that can be refined for further assessment projects. We have gained insights and information relevant to criteria, assignment type, and instructor perception of task. The Composition Coordinator has identified areas for future workshops among the WR faculty, working at a more discrete level before moving back to holistic assessment. However, for 2009-10, there will be a large emphasis on the JBAC mandates to the WR 121 curriculum; discussions and forums will be held to provide resources to faculty who must add and integrate 2 new outcomes to an already-ambitious curriculum that is taught in 10 weeks. This mandate will be an important component of assessment discussions as we strive to integrate the required outcomes and meet the 2012 implementation date.

C. Languages

The outcomes of the standardized testing are of great interest to the Spanish and French Departments. The individual student test results were provided students and department in mid-June this year. With faculty gone, the review, aggregation, and analysis of the scores will be undertaken in Fall, 2009, when faculty return and the assessment work is once again underway. The results, properly analyzed, will allow the two programs the opportunity to review their students' progress in relation to national norms and provide material for discussion of ongoing work around curriculum development.

Lane's support of Chinuk Wawa, an endangered language with a recent alphabet, is helping to create a first year textbook by the team at UO and Grand Ronde. This very unique program self-assesses through student evaluation of teaching and the use of student questionnaires to get feedback on the developing curriculum which the faculty has been creating. This program has been in existence for 4 years, with a second year offered for the first time in 2008-09. Its future is unclear because of its cost in relation to its small numbers of students overall; however, it is a unique program nationally, garners certain students' interest, and clearly supports Lane's commitment to diversity in numerous ways.