Assessment: A Perspective for Department Chairs and Program Directors

Jeannine Pinto, Assessment Officer

August 2012
Overview

• Assessment in the Big Picture
• Current practices in Arts & Sciences
• Examples
• Responsibilities & resources
Running a Department

1. Goals
   Reflect Mission & Vision

2. Educational Programs, Research, Service

3. Assessment
   Monitoring how well you’re meeting your goals

4. Use Results
Mission: How you define your own success?

• Why do you exist?
  – What are the opportunities or needs that we exist to address?

• What are your values?
  – What principles or beliefs guide your work?
Vision:
What is your direction for the future?

• What are your aspirations?

• How will you grow?

• How will you stay relevant?
Goals: Make Mission & Vision Real

- Set attainable goals that move you in the desired direction
- “Objectives” are goals made concrete
- Assessment connection: An objective is well-specified if it could potentially be evaluated with evidence.
Running a Department

1. Goals
   Reflect Mission & Vision

2. Educational Programs, Research, Service

3. Assessment
   Monitoring how well you’re meeting your goals

4. Use Results
Ideal: Mission, Vision, Goals for All Parts & Whole

- Contributing to knowledge
- Contribute to communities
- Educating students
Why do we do “assessment”?

• SUPPORT FOR INFORMED DECISION-MAKING
• For ourselves:
  – Determine whether we are meeting our goals
  – Identify areas in need of improvement
• For accreditors
  – And the U.S. Dept. of Education
• For the community at large & potential students
  – Communicate value of Higher Ed & Fordham
Nested Categories of Assessment

- Assessment of Program Effectiveness
  - Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes
    - Assessment of Student Outcomes
Process of Assessment

Identify Goals from Mission (periodically)

Identify appropriate objectives

Collect evidence

Summarize Results

Discuss Results and Make Plan

Make changes as needed
Process of Assessment

**PERIODICALLY**
- Identify goals from mission
- Identify appropriate objectives

**ANNUALLY**
- Select objectives to assess
- Collect evidence
- Summarize results
- Discuss results & plan response
- Act: carry out plan
Current Practices in A&S

• Expected to assess student outcomes annually
  – Should be student learning outcomes regularly

• Report of assessment accompanies annual planning documents
  – Consider planning when deciding assessment focus
Responsibilities & Resources

• Lead department/program discussions about
  – How to organize assessment efforts
  – Results of assessments
  – Follow up actions, as appropriate

• Recruit an assessment liaison or coordinator

• Stay in touch with coordinator as you develop plans for next year

• Incorporate assessment report/results into annual plan documents
Examples
Political Science: B.A.

- Majors are required to take one of several 4000-level seminars
- Seminar paper is source of assessment evidence
- 4 papers selected randomly from each seminar
- Faculty members teaching the seminars will use the program rubric to assess their own papers
- Completed rubrics summarized and discussed
# Senior Paper Rubric: Poli Sci

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Outcome</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2*</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4**</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical thinking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of problem/thesis/position</td>
<td>No Thesis</td>
<td>Thesis is identified and clearly stated.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thesis and subsidiary, embedded, or implicit aspects of thesis are identified and clearly stated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consideration of related perspectives</td>
<td>Does not acknowledge other possible perspectives</td>
<td>Acknowledges other possible perspectives, although they are not clearly stated</td>
<td></td>
<td>Synthesizes other perspectives and considers implications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research skills and analytical ability</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify and gather data/evidence appropriate or pertinent to the thesis</td>
<td>Reflects lack of understanding of appropriate sources and methods</td>
<td>Reflects basic understanding of appropriate sources and methods</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reflects clear understanding of appropriate sources and methods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation and appropriate use of supporting data/evidence</td>
<td>No supporting data/evidence</td>
<td>Evidence is used but not carefully examined.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Evidence is used and comprehensively and carefully examined.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Written communication</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Unstructured; most paragraphs are rambling and unfocused; no clear beginning or ending paragraphs; inappropriate or missing sequence markers</td>
<td>Structured; most paragraphs are focused; discernible beginning and ending paragraphs, some appropriate sequence markers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Well-structured; paragraphs are clearly focused and organized around a central theme; clear beginning and ending paragraphs; appropriate, coherent sequences and sequence markers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>Documentation generally inconsistent and incomplete; non-standard citation; citation information not incorporated into document</td>
<td>Documentation is fairly consistent but incomplete; general use of standard citation; citation information is somewhat incorporated into document</td>
<td></td>
<td>Documentation clear, consistent and complete; standard citation; cited information is incorporated effectively into document</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Assign 2 when the paper shows all of 1 and some of 3.

** Assign 4 when the paper shows all of 3 and some of 4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Outcome</th>
<th>Fall 2010</th>
<th>Spring 2011</th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>St Dev</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identification of problem/thesis/position</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consideration of related perspectives</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Skills and Analytical Ability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify and gather data/evidence appropriate or pertinent to the thesis</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluation and appropriate use of supporting data/evidence</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organization</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Documentation</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Psychology: PhD

• Goal: Students should be prepared to succeed in wide range of academic positions
• Objective: Students should be prepared to teach within area of expertise
• Spring 2011 assessment suggested improvements need in teaching training offered to graduate students
• Dept. developed teaching manual, supervision arrangements
• Will monitor teaching training by:
  – Student SEEQs
  – Faculty classroom observation and review of materials
  – Feedback from graduate students
Philosophy:

• MA & PhD students’ qualifying papers, provide formative and summative opportunities
• Goal: Professional quality papers
• Examine areas that students must rework/rewrite to write high quality papers
• Instituted pro-seminar requirement
• Assessment is tracking changes in high pass rate subsequent to creation of pro-sem
Who accredits us?

• University-wide:
  – Middle States Commission on Higher Education (one of 6 regional accreditors)
  – Peer review among member institutions

• Programs and Professional Schools:
  – National accrediting organization for specific training (e.g., NCATE, APA, AACSB)
So What Does Middle States Want?
The MSCHE Ideal: Have a goal for anything you do and assess how well you’re achieving it.

• Institutional goals (mission & strategic plan)
  – Administrative goals
    • Division goals
      – Administrative unit goals
  – Student learning goals
    • Institutional
    • Gen Ed curriculum
    • Academic programs
    • Student development programs
    • Support programs
Goals for University Students

**Learning Goals**

- Goal: Critical Thinker
- Goal: Well-versed in discipline
- Etc.

**Professional/Career Goals**

- Goal: Contributes to profession
- Goal: Conducts oneself ethically within profession
- Etc.
Goals -> Objectives

Objectives make goals measureable.

Goal 1: Students will be critical thinkers

- Objective: Read and evaluate information with an appreciation of context and source
- Objective: Evaluate logical flow in an argument
- Objective: Determine what information is pertinent to addressing a problem

Goal 2: Students will have professional level statistical knowledge

- Objective: Determine appropriate statistical techniques for level of measure and research question
- Objective: Evaluate data requirements for statistical technique
- Objective: Communicate statistical results accurately, including limitations and strengths
Goal 1: Students will be critical thinkers

- Objective: Read and evaluate information with an appreciation of context and source
- Objective: Evaluate logical flow in an argument
- Objective: Determine what information is pertinent to addressing a problem

On course paper, or in comps, or thesis, examine literature review for evidence of this.

OR

In research process, recognizes need for contextualizing information

OR

In reading others’ work, detects strengths and weaknesses in sources