

STRUCTURING A COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM: PITFALLS AND PROMISE

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Background

Over the past six years, Queensborough Community College, CUNY has developed and implemented a comprehensive student learning assessment plan. With efforts led by an interdisciplinary faculty and administration team, general education objectives were written and an individual course assessment process was piloted linking general education, curricular and course objectives. Workshops on student learning were also conducted, and a college-wide course objectives form and database was designed and implemented.

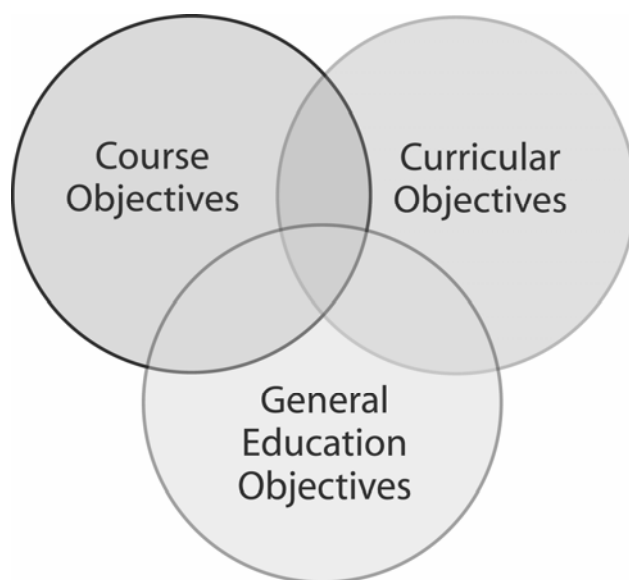
Assessment has been an integral part of the College's strategic planning process since 2000-01, and in 2004-05 a revised academic program review process was implemented, embedding general education assessment along with assessment of curriculum specific student learning outcomes. Results from the course assessment pilot were presented as part of the evidence of general education learning for the curricula under review. At the same time, QCC has participated in a CUNY-sponsored general education inquiry, the College's Mission Statement was revised (2005), and the faculty governance bodies have been active in promoting discussion of general education issues and the College's official statement of general education objectives.

With all of this in place, we now begin to examine the effectiveness of the three-pronged approach. Among the potential pitfalls of assessment programs are faculty resistance and administrative dictate. With this awareness, we are exploring what kinds of structures need to be in place to ensure continued and meaningful faculty leadership of assessment. Questions raised include: Do faculty members really think about their courses in relation to the whole of the students' curricular learning and their whole general education? Have enough faculty members bought in to drive meaningful assessment forward?

Additionally, Queensborough's approach has been to emphasize the suffusion of general education throughout the curriculum rather than to identify particular courses as meeting particular objectives. However, program review has shown that for many curricula, certain courses must, in fact, be depended upon to address these objectives. This raises issues for the departments that teach those courses and have to assess the achievement of their disciplinary objectives *and* the attainment of broader objectives, including, for example, those pertaining to communication skills, critical thinking and collaborative work.

**For further information, refer to Queensborough's
Assessment and Academic Program Review web page:
<http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/AcademicAffairs/APRA/default.asp>**

INTERSECTIONS OF GENERAL EDUCATION, CURRICULUM AND COURSE OBJECTIVES



Objectives	How assessed	Who assesses
General Education	Academic program review	Interdisciplinary and/or disciplinary faculty, assisted by Institutional Research
		External review team
	Course assessment	Individual faculty and/or groups of faculty; academic departments
	Proficiency examinations	University and/or college determines examination standards; states and/or federal government may impose exams
Curriculum	Academic program review	Interdisciplinary and/or disciplinary faculty, assisted by Institutional Research
		External review team
	Course assessment	Individual faculty and/or groups of faculty; academic departments
Course	Course assessment	Individual faculty and/or groups of faculty; academic departments

QUEENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE, CUNY GENERAL EDUCATION OBJECTIVES

At its May 2002 meeting, the QCC Academic Senate approved the following statement of Educational Objectives for QCC students pursuing associate degrees. Drawn from the College's Mission Statement, these are the general education objectives for student learning for all the College's degree programs. These objectives include a foundation in the liberal arts and sciences and competence in skills that are valued and/or required by employers, baccalaureate college programs, and the community at large.

Students who are graduated with an associate's degree will be able to:

General Objectives

1. meet requirements for successful transfer into the junior year of baccalaureate programs (transfer programs)
2. demonstrate mastery of discipline-specific knowledge, skills, and tools required for entry into or advancement in the job market in their field (career programs)

General Education Skills

3. write, read, listen, and speak clearly and effectively
4. use analytical reasoning skills and apply logic to solve problems
5. use quantitative skills and mathematical reasoning to solve problems
6. use information management skills effectively for academic research and lifelong learning
7. integrate knowledge and skills in their major field and across disciplines
8. differentiate and make informed decisions about issues based on value systems (ethical, philosophical, religious, cultural, and political)
9. use personal and collaborative skills for personal growth and to establish constructive relationships in a diverse society.

Liberal Arts and Sciences Foundation

10. recognize historical processes in the formation of ideas, cultural movements, political institutions, economic trends, and social structures
11. identify concepts and methods of the social sciences to examine human behavior, social institutions, and multi-cultural awareness
12. identify concepts and methods of the mathematical, physical and biological sciences and make judgments about contemporary issues in science and technology.
13. make informed judgments of the humanities and the arts as aesthetic and intellectual experiences

While many of these general education objectives are addressed by specific required courses in the curricula, *there is no strict course- by-objective correspondence for any curriculum*. Some of the learning objectives (such as communication and problem solving skills) are addressed repeatedly in a number of courses. Some of the learning objectives (such as collaborative skills) are addressed not as subject matter of a particular course but through the learning activities of courses. Some of the skills are reinforced through students' participation in activities outside the classroom, such as academic advisement and club activity.

The College's Assessment Program will be measuring student achievement in each of these general education areas and will incorporate relevant results from the Course Assessment Project. Results from assessment of student success in meeting specific curricular objectives will also provide evidence for academic program reviews.

Attachment 4 – New Course Proposal Guidelines / Template

NEW COURSE PROPOSAL

1. Course prefix and number:	
2. Course title:	
3. Course description for the college catalog:	
4. Prerequisites and/or co-requisites:	
5. Hours and credits (specify if class hours, lab. hours, recitation hours, etc.)	
6. Curricula into which the course would be incorporated and the requirements it will satisfy:	
*7. Curricular objectives addressed by this course.	
*8. General Education objectives addressed by this course. [see QCC Educational Objectives statement in College Catalog]	
*9. Course objectives / expected student learning outcomes. [see QCC Course Objectives Form, Attachment 8]	
*10. Assessment – methods used to determine the success of students (whether or not they achieved the goals and developed the competencies. Classroom assessment tools may include paper and pencil tests, performance assessment, oral questions, portfolio, and other options.):	
11. A detailed course syllabi of pertinent courses (include a laboratory outline when applicable) [see Recommended Syllabus template, Attachment 7]:	
12. Methods of Instruction (such as lecture, distance learning, the web, television, writing intensive):	
13. Texts, references and aids. A bibliography for the course and supplementary material, if any:	
14. Rationale – why the course is needed or desired; student demand; projected enrollment; how often it will be offered, etc:	
15. Transferability as an elective or course required by a major to senior colleges (with supporting documents if applicable). Include comparable courses at senior or other community colleges, if applicable:	
16. Faculty availability:	
17. Facilities and technology availability:	
18. List of courses to be withdrawn, or replaced by this course, if any:	
19. Enrollment limit and frequency the course is offered (each semester, once a year, alternating years):	
20. What changes in any programs will be necessitated or requested as a result of this course's additions/charges:	

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***Items resulting from assessment planning**

QUEENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE, CUNY

Academic Program Review: Six-Step Model for Assessing Curricular Objectives Using QCC Educational Objectives as a Base

Example from 2004-05 Program Review Report for the A.S. in Liberal Arts and Sciences (Mathematics and Science)

OBJECTIVE 3: WRITE, READ, LISTEN, AND SPEAK CLEARLY AND EFFECTIVELY			
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR THE CURRICULUM	IMPLEMENTATION (Courses and assignments)	ASSESSMENT TOOLS (Measurement/ data collection)	ASSESSMENT STANDARDS (RUBRICS)
	For each disciplinary learning objective, describe where in the curriculum and through what kind of activities students will attain the disciplinary learning	Describe the data collection (e.g., classroom assessment activities, student surveys, graduate surveys, employer surveys, portfolio analysis, CPE or other test results) that will be used to demonstrate students have met the disciplinary objectives.	Describe or attach the rubric (descriptive scale of standards) to be used to measure student achievement of the learning objective. Attach rubrics.
Demonstrate proficiency in communication skills, including technical writing and oral presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In EN -101 students compose essays using various rhetorical strategies, students will read texts critically, students will conduct research and incorporate sources into their writing, and students will assert and support their own texts and ideas. Students compose and revise multiple drafts of essays. Students summarize, analyze, and synthesize texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CUNY Proficiency Examination (CPE) is an important measure of this reading and writing part of this objective. Another assignment chosen for the pilot study was EN-101 (English Composition I) final exam. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptable CPE score. The EN-101 pilot assessment project was re-graded in accordance with an established rubric, the CUNY Proficiency Examination Scoring Guide.
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR THE CURRICULUM (Copy objectives from above)	ASSESSMENT DATA	INTERPRETATION AND EVALUATION OF DATA	RESULTING ACTION
	Describe assessment results: how did students perform on each objective?	What do the assessment results mean? How well have students met the learning objectives? Did the assessment process show whether students had met the objectives?	What changes if any will be made as a result of the assessment?
Demonstrate proficiency in communication skills, including technical writing and oral presentation	Number of students participating in the pilot study: 156. Mean CPE score: 3.70. Standard deviation (SD): .92. Range of CPE scores: 1.5 to 5.5	A review of the data generated by the pilot assessment project indicates that students demonstrate varied degrees of competence regarding their ability to read and write clearly and effectively, the primary general educational objective under study.	New scoring instructions were given to the faculty and they were asked to work on the effectiveness of CPE guidelines in judging the performance of students.

QUEENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE, CUNY
ASSESSING INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: COLLEGE MISSION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

<u>College Mission Statement</u>	<u>City University of New York Performance Goals and Targets 2005-06</u>	<u>Strategic Planning Objectives for 2005-06</u>
<i>EXCERPTS from documents</i>		
<p>[The College] provid[es] a rich general education core aimed at enhancing students' critical thinking and decision making skills...</p>	<p><u>University Goal</u></p> <p>Promote CUNY Flagship programs and strengthen premier campus programs, while ensuring that every college offers a sound general education program.</p> <p><u>University targets 2005-06</u></p> <p>All colleges will implement their approved Coordinated Undergraduate Education (CUE) plan and improve integration of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) throughout Gen Ed and all academic disciplines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In conjunction with the Office of Academic Affairs and CETL, the Faculty Executive Committee will plan the third Conference of the College on October 28, 2005, focusing on the outcomes of discussion papers on the following topics generated by the General Education inquiry component of CUE: <i>General Education in Transfer and Career Programs (cornerstone and capstone courses); Teacher Narrative Inquiry; ePortfolios; Faculty Forum (General Education Objectives and Assessment)</i> and reach conclusions about what to implement. • With the goal of designing an integrated educational experience that incorporates remediation, freshman and sophomore years, and that provides cohesion within and across the curricula, decide how remedial and developmental courses, academic support services, learning communities and writing intensive courses can best support this overall general education design. Use CUE funding to implement key components of the freshman experience design resulting from the outcomes of the general education inquiry. Establish a plan for assessing the effectiveness of the new design.
<p>To help ensure excellence in teaching and learning, Queensborough engages in on-going assessment of its academic offerings...</p>	<p><u>University Goal</u></p> <p>Use program reviews and assessment outcome efforts to enhance and update programs, pedagogy and use of technology to improve instruction.</p> <p><u>University Targets for 2005-06</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleges will conduct external program reviews and implement resulting action plans and review and update non-credit courses and programs. • All colleges will show progress in implementing learning outcomes plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College changed the program review process to focus on curriculum rather than departments, during the 04/05 academic year. In 2005/06, review results of the 04/05 process, adopting modifications as required. Program review will be conducted for the A.A. in Liberal Arts and Sciences, the TAC/ABET accredited programs (CT, ET, MT, and PL) and for Telecommunications Technology and Computerized Architectural and Industrial Design. • Once course objectives have been written for all the active courses in the College, a regular schedule for assessment of individual courses and reporting on assessment outcomes will be established.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How useful have your assessment results been for helping faculty and administrators know how students are learning?
2. Does your college's set of general education objectives engage faculty in a discussion of student learning?
3. From your experience, can assessment of common general education objectives across a variety of courses help students integrate their learning?