MSC—The Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment

AT A GLANCE: POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES FOR FACULTY PARTICIPANTS IN THE MULTI-STATE COLLABORATIVE PILOT STUDY

This document provides a summary of potential benefits, opportunities, and challenges to faculty who participate in the Multi-State Collaborative Pilot Study. The items listed below are intended to provide general guidance. Project leaders recognize that campus cultures and climates are highly diverse. What may appear to be an opportunity for one campus may emerge as a challenge to another. Responses to this document are welcome. Please address responses to Gloria Auer at SHEEO gauer@sheeo.org

The overall goal of the project: Faculty from an array of campuses in nine states will be gathering work and then submitting that work to be scored by a project-organized group of faculty, all using selected VALUE rubrics. The project intends to assess student work in a way that is valid, reliable, and consistent or aligned--without using standardized tests. The pilot study will demonstrate the feasibility of such an approach to assessment.

**FACULTY BENEFITS:**

*Participation in the pilot study will provide faculty the opportunity to:*

- work with other faculty to develop an assessment process based on authentic student work, and as a result, enhance their understanding of the connection between institutional learning outcomes and program level assessment for their department, generating new ideas to improve teaching and learning in their own classrooms

- learn from and share information with colleagues across departments, institutions, and states on assignment design, and teaching and learning approaches to increase student success

- gain expertise in designing assignments that align with course, program, and institution or general education learning outcomes

- identify the difference between grading and “scoring” while recognizing the importance of both for enhancing and measuring learning

- use student work collected for the pilot study as part of degree and/or program assessment
• learn more about direct assessment of student work using rubrics, and gain experience in using rubrics, specifically the VALUE rubrics, to assess particular learning outcomes

• provide opportunities for faculty to be involved in scoring student work, analyzing the assessment data and results, sharing a faculty perspective on what the data suggest, and bringing these insights back to campus to engage colleagues in curricular improvement

*Participation in scoring student work will:*

• facilitate discussions of common expectations for student learning

• facilitate cross-institutional faculty dialogues

• provide faculty the opportunity to view student work from other institutions and states

• provide faculty the opportunity to study and describe student work as a progression of demonstrated learning at levels keyed to degrees

• allow faculty the opportunity to score student work from other institutions and states

• facilitate sharing of ideas to improve pedagogy

• facilitate sharing of ideas for intentional assignment design as an essential part of building valid assessment of student learning

• provide faculty with training and experience in scoring student work using the VALUE rubrics for written communication, quantitative literacy, and in some instances, critical thinking

• increase faculty scoring experience building on-campus assessment capacity

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACULTY: HOW EXACTLY WILL PARTICIPATION AFFECT MY WORKLOAD?**

You will be asked in your capacity as a faculty member:

1. to become familiar with the selected VALUE rubric(s)

2. to re-examine the design of assignments already being used or to consider development of new assignments geared specifically to meet particular learning outcomes

   Discussion:
   • Is your assignment appropriate for assessment using the appropriate VALUE rubric?
   • Does your assignment align with broad assignment parameters offered by the project?
Do your assignment instructions prompt students to demonstrate the intended skills?

3. to submit an assignment (either already being used or newly developed) and the corresponding student work during the fall 2014

Campus project leads will alert faculty to professional development activities and resources to assist in assignment design and to answer other questions related to the pilot study.

**CAMPUS BENEFITS:**

Campus participation will:

- help campuses publically affirm their commitment to improve the quality of student learning
- help campuses respond to accountability expectations with assessments based on authentic student work
- help elevate the importance of the quality of student learning as documented by assessment of student work
- provide external validation for internal campus assessment results
- provide the opportunity for campuses to learn from benchmarking their assessment results to the aggregated results of similar institutions in their state and among states in the MSC
- result in benefits to students as faculty gain access to state and multi-state assessment information useful for curricular planning, program improvement, and enrichment of pedagogy

Campuses will gain access to data and analysis of data on student learning, helping them to

- identify trends in institutional data that vary from or are reflected in the state and multi-state data
- benefit from the MSC findings regarding inter-rater reliability and VALUE rubric validity
- provide insight into the ability to collect assignments and corresponding student work suitable for assessing written communication, quantitative literacy, and in selected instances, critical thinking from students nearing graduation—valuable for creating on-going professional development activities to build institutional capacity

**Overview of Information on Sampling and Scoring:**

- Sampling Size: The project offers guidance on the needed sample size at the campus level to generalize to the total campus population of students, and the sample size needed to generalize to subgroups based on race/ethnicity, gender, discipline or program, age, etc.
- Sampling Guidelines: Established sampling guidelines will be available for institutions to use or modify for your own campus assessment initiatives
- Sampling Consultation: Campuses may work with the MSC sampling subgroup to establish sampling methods and protocols and determine needed sample sizes for meeting the assessment goals of individual campuses.
- Scoring:
  - A selected group of faculty from the nine states will score collected student work
Institutions will have access to the scoring protocols, which may be used online for centralized and on-line scoring.

**Information on Resource Commitment:**

Campus participation will require some local and state resources for:
- professional development activities
- collecting and de-identifying student work and the corresponding assignment instructions and cover sheet
- collecting and submitting information on student work (artifacts) to the national database
- engaging campus constituencies in the analysis of and feedback regarding their own institutional-level data.

Campus and state leads will have more information about resources.

**Prompts for Further Discussion:**

Well-designed assignments are essential to high-quality direct assessment. Assignments are thus an important element of an effective assessment plan. Intentional assignment design requires practice and experience. The MSC pilot will offer opportunities for practice.

While an individual faculty member’s assignment will have distinctive features, it can nevertheless help students to achieve learning outcomes that are shared across an array of different courses. Assessment of assignments that are intentionally designed to help students reach shared learning outcomes can be done in a valid and reliable way. The project offers opportunities to practice assessment that is aligned across very different courses.

Course grades are often composite measures of a student’s performance in the course, primarily based on a student’s expression of content mastery, rather than demonstration of particular learning outcomes. Direct assessment allows faculty to focus on student demonstration of a specific learning outcome.

Students will benefit from the experience faculty will gain. Students also benefit from the transparency in viewing rubrics and the articulation of standards of learning at progressive levels of development. Students learn from self-assessment, using the rubrics. Obviously, students are not centrally involved in the pilot, but as campuses move forward, faculty should become aware of the benefits for their students, from knowing the rubrics, discovering expected learning outcomes, considering the results of the scoring and discerning their own improved ability to engage in self-assessment in relation to judgments by scorers.