

SMC Core: Assessment

Assessment is the process of examining and evaluating students' learning and progress. Assessment is to be **meaningful**. It must directly support the mission of student learning. Assessment is to be **manageable**. It must make use faculty time and campus resources efficiently. Assessment of the core occurs on three levels: the level of the individual course, the level of the goal, and the level of the core as a whole. What follows is a synopsis of assessment activities and responsibilities at each of these levels.

THE DESIGNATION OF COURSES FOR THE SMC CORE

Students will demonstrate their achievement of the learning goals/outcomes of the SMC Core through their work in specially-designated courses.¹ In order for a course to receive designation for a particular learning goal, departments and programs will submit that course to the appropriate CCC Working Group. The Working Group recommends designation based on its confirmation that the course has a good plan for student learning to meet the learning outcomes of that particular Core goal. Five years after the designation is given to a course, that course must be brought to the Working Group again for continued designation. The CCC does not confirm the success of student learning in individual courses – only that the faculty have a good plan (before the course is offered) and that they have been thoughtfully adapting the course in response to student learning (when the course is up for continued designation).²

- When will this happen? – Course designation will begin in the 2011-2012 academic year and, on an ongoing basis, as departments submit courses for the core. What is required of departments, programs and/or faculty?
 - Before the course is offered...
 - Departments/programs/faculty will explicitly craft their course content and pedagogy to facilitate student learning of the chosen learning goals. (This will require an annotated syllabus.)
 - Departments/programs/faculty will design assignments in which students can demonstrate their achievement of the chosen learning goals. (This will require an assignment description). They will gather evidence of student learning appropriate to the course and discipline (e.g., papers, performances, quizzes, problem sets, lab reports, and presentations). These items are referred to as “artifacts” or “student artifacts.”
 - Departments/programs/faculty will submit the annotated syllabus and assignment description, along with the course designation form to the Working Group for review. (If the Working Group decides that modifications need to be made, it will provide feedback and invite revision and resubmission.)

¹ For many of the goals, these need not be full-credit courses, but could include a variety of other experiences, e.g., internships, study abroad. However, since these experiences will be “counted” through the use of 0.25 credit items on the transcript, experiences are technically “courses”, too.

² There should be no misperception that the CCC is playing Big Brother. Evaluation of faculty success is the purview of the departments, the deans, and the Rank and Tenure Committee.

- When the course is offered...
 - Faculty assist in collecting the artifacts of student learning for use in goal level assessment by the Office of Assessment. For essays or other digital products, faculty should require that students upload them directly to an electronic database. For exams and other non-digital products, faculty will be asked to submit the artifacts to the Director of Assessment for digitization or another form of storage.
- After the course is offered...
 - Faculty commit to participate in a two-hour scoring / discussion session for each semester that the course is taught.
 - Departments/faculty submit the course for continued designation after five years.
- What is required for the CCC / Working Groups?
 - Before the course is offered...
 - Articulation of clear expectations for student learning in each of the learning goals (via methods such as rubrics, sample syllabi, sample assignments)
 - Evaluation of courses for designation in the SMC Core
 - When the course is offered...
 - Nothing
 - After the course is offered...
 - Evaluation of courses for continued designation after five years
- What is required for the Director of Assessment?
 - Nothing

GOAL-LEVEL ASSESSMENT

At this level, we carefully evaluate how well are students are doing in the SMC Core. This assessment exercise is not focused on individual courses.³ Based on the student artifacts collected across the courses designated as fulfilling a particular learning goal, we will measure the goal-specific learning of the student body as a whole. This will take place through sampling statistically significant portions of the body of artifacts. The aim is to see how well our students are meeting the learning outcomes for that learning goal. The primary mechanism for such goal-level assessment will be faculty scoring sessions, in which faculty evaluate and discuss student artifacts. Short, two-hour sessions (required of all faculty teaching in the core) will occur regularly for the purposes of norming faculty expectations and as a brief cohort for sharing strategies for teaching these learning goals. Longer, more intense sessions (voluntary for those faculty who are interested) will occur for one goal per semester with the purpose of fully evaluating student learning in that goal and preliminary to addressing any needed changes to the goal, learning outcomes, etc.

- When will these happen? – The norming sessions will take place on an ongoing basis at regular intervals. Each semester, one goal will be assessed so that all goals will have been assessed at the end of six years.
- What is required of faculty?
 - All faculty who teach in the core agree to participate in a two-hour scoring / discussion session for each semester that the course is taught.

³ While all faculty are concerned with student performance in their courses, they are not asked as individuals to offer any statistical assessment of student learning in their courses. Evaluation of learning takes place when groups of faculty gather to evaluate samples of student learning from across the college.

- Some faculty will volunteer to participate in full goal evaluation sessions that will occur at the rate of one goal per semester.
- What is required for the CCC / Working Groups?
 - Help to structure, lead, and participate in the appropriate scoring sessions and full goal evaluations.
 - Help to prepare a report on student learning for the goal(s) in question.
 - Make recommendations to the Senate about any needed changes in the language of the learning goals, learning outcomes, etc.
- What is required for the Director of Assessment?
 - Help to structure, lead, and participate in the appropriate scoring sessions and full goal evaluations.
 - Manage the student artifacts from the courses.
 - Select appropriate samples of student artifacts.
 - Collect and evaluate the numbers from the faculty scoring sessions.
 - Help to prepare a report on student learning for the goal(s) in question.

CORE-LEVEL ASSESSMENT (THINKING ABOUT THE BIG PICTURE)

The cycle of assessing individual learning goals will proceed at a rate of one goal per semester for six years, during which time there may be changes to the wording of the learning goals and learning outcomes. In the seventh year, after all twelve learning goals have been evaluated, there will be no goal-level assessment of student learning. The campus will take this opportunity to engage in extended reflection about the core as a whole.

- When will this happen? – Every seventh year
- What is required for departments / faculty?
 - Participate in the reflection on the whole core
- What is required for the CCC / Working Groups?
 - Present summary reports about what has been learned in the goal-level assessment over the past six years
 - Structure, lead, and participate in faculty surveys, open forums, etc.
 - As necessary, propose changes to the overall SMC Core, to be submitted to the Senate
- What is required for the Director of Assessment?
 - Present summary reports about what has been learned in the goal-level assessment over the past six years