

# **Santiago Canyon College**

## **Statement on Standards of Assessment Practice for Instructional Programs**

In order to meet the mandate of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges ACCJC standard for proficiency in outcomes assessment by fall 2012 as well as to prepare for the acquisition and implementation of an assessment management system, the college has developed the following statement on standards of assessment practice as it relates to instructional programs.

Assessment of instruction at Santiago Canyon College meets each of the following criteria:

- 1) identification of at least two student learning outcomes for each course and one for each program on file,
- 2) use of direct and indirect assessment methods,
- 3) current and specific assessments of record for course and program level SLOs on file,
- 4) a regular, explicitly stated cycle of assessment for all courses and programs on file,
- 5) reports of assessment results and action plans on file.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment serves as the central repository for receiving assessment information. Assessments of record, cycles of assessment, and reports of assessment results for all courses and programs should be filed with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment.

The five criteria stated above represent the threshold for assessment practice in instruction for the institution. They enable the institution to describe a common core of learning to external stakeholders and agencies. The college invites and encourages faculty to engage in outcomes assessment practices that go beyond the threshold established by the criteria.

Each of the criteria is elaborated further below.

### **Number of Course and Program Learning Outcomes**

As previously agreed upon by the Curriculum and Instruction Council, each course is to specify a minimum of two student learning outcomes. Each program must establish at least one program outcome. Faculty are strongly encouraged to work collaboratively to develop a set of student learning outcomes that best reflect the broad or overarching goals of their courses and programs. At SCC, student learning outcomes at the course level are stored on the Course Outline of Record in

CurricUNET; as such, they are widely available to the public. It is important that faculty regularly review their student learning outcomes to ensure that they are in alignment with the stated course purposes and instructional content, activities, and assignments that are described on the Course Outline of Record.

### **Use of Direct and Indirect Assessment**

The primary purpose of assessment at Santiago Canyon College is to understand and improve the teaching and learning process. To accomplish this, Santiago Canyon College strongly encourages *direct assessment* of student learning outcomes at the course level. Direct assessment of learning should be embedded in course activities and assignments. Direct assessment is aligned with the stated course purposes and objectives and connected to graded student assignments. Further, direct assessment uses summative measures to describe the achievement of learning outcomes rather than student self-assessments or perceptions of learning in the course. Direct assessment methods are preferred at the course level because they provide *evidence* or confirmation that learning has occurred as a result of the course rather than an *indication* that learning has occurred. Some examples of direct assessments include evaluations of: exams, quizzes, papers, reports, presentations, performances, and projects.

Direct assessment is also strongly encouraged for highly structured programs, those that involve a common core of coursework or a prescribed sequence of courses. For highly structured programs, direct assessment is best accomplished through graded assignments developed for capstone courses that reflect the cumulative knowledge a student would acquire as a result of taking a common core of coursework or course sequence.

In contrast to direct assessment, which provides evidence of student learning, *indirect assessment* provides an indication or suggestion that learning has occurred. Because indirect assessment is not considered evidentiary, its use is reserved for programs which are more flexibly structured. Programs which lack a common core of coursework or a prescribed sequence of courses. These loosely structured programs are often characterized by a menu style approach, which allows students to select particular courses from within specific content areas to meet the requirements of the program. For example, the Liberal Arts degrees in Arts, Humanities, and Communication, Math and Science, Multi-Cultural Studies, and Social and Behavioral Sciences are loosely structured programs as described above. As such, these programs are more individualized, and direct assessment of learning is not easily accomplished. Additionally, indirect assessment is reserved for assessment of institutional level student learning outcomes. An example of an indirect assessment method is a survey measuring student perceptions of learning in specific content areas.

Faculty are strongly encouraged to use direct assessment methods whenever possible to describe the achievement of stated learning outcomes as well as any other assessment methods they deem necessary to explain assessment results. Effective use of direct and indirect assessment methods ensures that the college will be prepared to provide consistent and uniform evidence to the ACCJC that reflects a more complete view of student learning and meets the proficiency requirements.

### **Assessments of Record**

Assessments of record for courses and programs identify in very specific ways both the type of assessment to be used and the evaluation criteria that will be used to determine the degree to which stated outcomes are achieved. Faculty are encouraged to work collaboratively within their disciplines and departments to develop common forms of assessment and uniform evaluation criteria which reflect the collective knowledge of the faculty in the discipline, foster department consensus over individual preferences, and ensure continuity and consistency in expectations for students and the evaluation of student work samples. In developing assessment instruments and evaluation criteria, faculty should strive to balance individual teaching styles with the need to develop consistent results that can be meaningfully interpreted across sections of the same course.

For example, a common type of assessment might consist of a final exam with a set of shared, embedded questions measuring a single student learning outcome or set of outcomes. Using this type of assessment, faculty could implement the assessment instrument across sections of a course. Uniform evaluation criteria using this type of assessment would include identifying the common test items for the exam, mapping test items to course or program SLOs, and specifying the number or percent correct that is needed to meet the stated learning outcome.

Similarly, faculty could implement a term paper on a specific topic as a common type of assessment. With a term paper, the parameters of the assignment could be specified with some degree of flexibility; however the evaluation criteria would need to be uniform and correspond to domains of learning associated with the SLOs and the achievement levels associated with the stated learning outcomes for the course. This can be accomplished by developing and implementing a common or standardized rubric. Common or standardized rubrics should be normed by the faculty and specify domains of learning and the levels of achievement for each of the domains.

Common forms of assessment and uniform evaluation make learning expectations and standards of performance explicit for students and enable the institution to validly and reliably describe core achievements within and across specific areas of student learning.

## Cycle of Assessment

The institution expects faculty to assess achievement of student learning outcomes using a regular cycle of assessment that is connected to the program review schedule. This schedule specifies that all programs are reviewed once every three years. In keeping with this schedule, the institution expects that the achievement of *all* course and program level student learning outcomes will be evaluated holistically, using longitudinal data when possible, at least once within a three year cycle. For example, during the program review process, programs and disciplines should discuss the degree to which all course and program outcomes were achieved rather than specific outcomes for a particular course at one point in time.

Further, in an effort to ensure that each discipline and department continues to make progress in achieving the standard of sustainable, continuous quality improvement as well as engages in a robust dialogue related to the achievement of student learning outcomes, the college uses a standard calendar for course level outcomes assessment. This calendar specifies the assessment schedule as follows:

- course outcomes associated with courses offered in both fall and spring terms are assessed in the fall with results reported during the spring term;
- and course outcomes associated with courses offered once or less than once annually should be assessed during the term in which they are offered with results reported in the subsequent term.

Assessment and dialog about student learning should occur at least once annually for courses offered in fall or spring terms and as often as is possible for those courses offered less than annually. Disciplines and departments may choose to evaluate all course outcomes for a course within a given term or they can choose to evaluate specific outcomes for a course within a given term. For example, if a course has three outcomes, and is offered in fall and spring terms annually, the department might choose to assess all three outcomes at once or assess one outcome each fall for three successive years. However, if the department chooses to assess all course outcomes in one term, assessment for that course would need to be conducted each fall to meet the requirement that course outcomes be assessed and dialog about student learning occurred at least annually. Each course and program outcome should be evaluated at least once within the three-year cycle and each department or discipline should follow the standard assessment schedule when assessing and submitting their results.

Using the three-year cycle of holistic assessment in conjunction with the standard calendar for course level outcomes assessment creates a systematic cycle of assessment that is connected to larger college planning and resource allocation processes and helps to develop widespread dialog about student learning across

course and program offerings. Frequent assessment and dialog about student learning are necessary to foster deep learning and demonstrate proficiency with the ACCJC standards for outcomes assessment. Appendix A contains a sample Assessment Cycle report.

### **Results**

Assessment results are used by faculty to understand and improve the teaching and learning process. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment serves as the central repository for receiving assessment reports. Faculty should file reports of assessment results for all courses and programs with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment. Reports should use the five-column format and identify the degree to which stated outcomes have been achieved as well as any plans for improvement or change (see Appendix B). Rather than submitting multiple reports for different sections of the same course, annual reports of course outcomes should be aggregated by course prior to submission.

## Appendix A

### Assessment Cycle

All SLOs should be assessed at least once within a three-year cycle. A complete assessment cycle includes: gathering assessment data, analyzing assessment data, sharing results within the department or discipline, and reporting results. In the matrix below, indicate the term in which each of your course SLOs will be assessed (inclusive of the entire assessment cycle).

| <b>SLO</b>                                     | <b>Data Gathered</b>         | <b>Data Analyzed</b>                   | <b>Data Shared<br/>Improvement<br/>Dialogue</b> | <b>Results Reported</b> | <b>Changes<br/>Implemented</b> |
|--|------------------------------|--|---|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Sample: SLO 1<br>(analyze statistical<br>data) | Fall 2011 – by<br>November 1 | Late fall 2011 –<br>before end of term | Flex – mid-January                              | Spring 2012             | Fall 2012                      |
| <b>SLO 1</b>                                   |                              |  |   |                         |                                |
| <b>SLO 2</b>                                   |                              |  |   |                         |                                |
| <b>SLO 3</b>                                   |                              |  |   |                         |                                |
| <b>SLO 4</b>                                   |                              |  |   |                         |                                |

## Appendix B

### COURSE SLO ASSESSMENT REPORT, SCC

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Course: \_\_\_\_\_

Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Member: \_\_\_\_\_

| 1) Outcome to be assessed | 2) Means of assessment and criteria of success | 3) Summary of data collected | 4) Analysis of data | 5) Plan of action/what to do next |
|---------------------------|--|------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                           |  |                              |                     |                                   |