

HISTORY OF THE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

Introduction.

The Relationship between the Curriculum and Academic Standards (CAS) committee and the Assessment Committee (AC) in Building and Maintaining a Robust Curriculum.

Almost from the beginning of Heartland Community College's fairly brief history, the Curriculum and Academic Standards (CAS) Committee has played a crucial role not only in providing guidance to faculty writing new courses and programs, but also in assuring the creation of academically appropriate curricula characterized by suitable rigor and meaningful content.

Creation of such curricula, however, is a task separate from their maintenance. This second component is both the duty and responsibility not of a single committee but of dedicated and committed faculty members and administrators whose goal is to assure high quality courses and curricula that can take their place among the best that community colleges can offer.

To formalize efforts toward that goal, as well as to assist all faculty in these efforts, an additional advisory body, focused on assessment of general education outcomes, was formed somewhat later in the College's history. Originally a sub-team of the CAS committee, more recently this group has become a separate standing committee at the College, at the same time widening its interest from general education courses alone to include academic assessment in general. This change is reflective of the difference between these two major instructional committees, CAS and the AC.

Whereas CAS has as its primary responsibility the advisement of faculty in their tasks of creating or modifying challenging courses and programs, the Assessment Committee has the primary responsibility of creating and maintaining throughout these courses and programs a learning environment that supports student success. More specifically, CAS has the responsibility of assuring the College and the community that academic standards are appropriately rigorous and are fairly applied. The AC, by contrast, has the role of assuring that the course described by the syllabus is *successful*--that is, that the course fosters significant learning attainment, and that student learning outcomes are achieved both within the class and within the program overall. Thus both committees have responsibilities related to learning outcomes. CAS, through its advisement of faculty, helps them to select appropriate outcomes that are then incorporated into course syllabuses. The AC, by contrast, advises faculty and departments concerning the implementation of these outcomes both within courses and departmentally. At the same time, the AC works actively to promote internal research related to assuring course, departmental, and institutional effectiveness. In short, CAS's role can be summarized as one of oversight, while the AC's role is one of implementation.

OPERATING GUIDELINES OF THE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

Definition of Terms:

- Alternate:** Person designated to cast the vote of a committee member who cannot attend a regular meeting.
- Chair:** The chair is the presiding officer at the meetings who coordinates all activities of the committee. The chair is selected from among the full time faculty members serving on the committee. The term of the chair is one year.
- Co-chairs of ad hoc committee:** The co-chairs of the ad hoc committee shall be the vice chair of the Assessment Committee (AC) and the Vice Chair of the Curriculum and Academic Standards Committee (CAS).
- Elected member:** One full time and one adjunct faculty member from each division will each serve a two year term on the AC. These are voting members and are eligible to serve as Chair or Vice Chair.
- Ex-officio member:** Non-voting committee member, which includes the Vice President of Instruction, Director of Institutional Research, CAS chair and Dean of Instruction.
- LO's:** Learning Outcomes statements. These statements guide faculty in choosing and implementing their assessment goals.
- Majority of quorum:** A majority of the quorum shall consist of a simple, numerical majority of the voting members.
- Other members:** The committee may agree to the inclusion of other members who express an interest in assessment, provided that the elected faculty members approve their inclusion. These members will have all the rights and privileges of regular members, except that they may not serve as Chair or Vice Chair, and will serve for two years.
- Quorum:** A quorum shall consist of 50% of the faculty voting members. A quorum is necessary in order to vote on an issue, but is not necessary to hold a meeting.
- Secretary:** The secretary will take minutes of each meeting, maintain a record of the meetings and will assist the chair with preparing the agenda. The secretary is a non-voting member.

Student Services Member: This member will have all the rights and privileges of regular members, except that this person may not serve as Chair or Vice Chair. This member will serve for two years.

Vice Chair: The Vice Chair assists the Chair and presides at meetings in his or her absence. The vice chair is elected by the committee yearly from among AC full time faculty members. The term of the vice chair is one year.

Overview of the Assessment Committee.

The Assessment Committee (AC) is a full standing committee consisting of faculty, staff, and administrators. However, the membership is predominantly composed of faculty, as assessment should be faculty driven.

The committee meets on a regular basis throughout the year to provide leadership for the College's assessment efforts. In fulfillment of this role, the AC is involved in the following actions:

- Advises faculty, departments and divisions about assessment goals, techniques and procedures
- Maintains the College's Learning Outcomes (LOs) in collaboration with CAS
- Assists in the planning, development and implementation of assessment activities
- Reports the results of assessment efforts
- Provides a forum for meaningful discussions of assessment
- Provides assessment resources for faculty.

I. Mission of the Assessment Committee.

As educators, we at Heartland Community College believe that institutional success is measured by student success. Therefore, we are committed to improving student performance, and we believe that assessment provides perhaps the best tool for achieving that improvement by furnishing us feedback about the effectiveness of teaching and the quality of learning. Such assessment should be formative,¹ occur on multiple levels,² and uphold the integrity of teaching and learning at Heartland Community College.

The Assessment Committee (AC) provides faculty with a forum to discuss and share assessment strategies, makes assessment resources available to encourage continued learning about assessment, maintain the College's Learning Outcomes, serves as a repository for faculty, department and division assessment efforts and encourages challenging and creative student-centered instruction. The AC shall be faculty-led with appropriate support from the Administration to carry out its responsibilities.

[¹Formative: of or relating to the growth and development. In term of assessment, we mean using the cycle of teaching, learning, assessment, and feedback throughout the endurance of the course. For a further explanation, see p. 5 of *Classroom Assessment Techniques*, by Cross and Angelo.]

[²Multiple-levels imply that assessments should include methods that examine student learning in daily activities (individual assignments, short essays, tests, etc.), throughout the whole course (portfolios, final exams, cumulative papers, etc.), within the discipline or department (program and department goals), and within the entire College (learning outcomes).]

II. Functions of the Committee.

The Assessment Committee has four main functions:

1. To oversee the College's academic assessment efforts. Accordingly, the AC shall
 - a. Develop and maintain an official College Instructional Assessment Plan
 - b. Record the history of assessment at HCC
 - c. Determine current assessment needs
 - d. Establish assessment goals that are consistent with the College's goals
 - e. Assist disciplines and/or departments with programmatic assessment goals
 - f. Review student performance with respect to the LOs
 - g. Work with the office of Institutional Research to collect information for NCA.
 - h. Create and maintain a repository of assessment literature and activities
 - i. Report assessment results.
2. To maintain the College's Learning Outcomes (LOs). In this role the Assessment Committee will collaborate with CAS in any of the following activities:
 - a. Review, revise, and adapt LO statements as necessary (procedure for this appears under section IV. Committee Procedures)
 - b. Interpret the LOs for faculty
 - c. Provide assistance for updating master syllabuses
 - d. Provide assistance for new or major revisions in courses
 - e. Coordinate information with program reviews and institutional reviews
3. To provide a forum for meaningful discussions of assessment. This discussion may take any of the following forms:
 - a. Faculty-led workshops and seminars (e.g., "Best Practices" day)
 - b. Online discussions
 - c. Discipline-level discussions
 - d. *An Assessment Newsletter*
4. To provide assessment resources to faculty. Among others, these resources include:

- a. Workshops, both internal and external
- b. Assessment web pages
- c. Books, magazines, and other references sources
- d. Institutional data
- e. *An Assessment Newsletter*
- f. A yearly assessment report

III. Members of the Committee.

The AC is primarily composed of faculty; the majority being fulltime, because of the College's belief that faculty should have principal ownership of the assessment process. However, other stakeholders are also represented on the committee.

A. Chair. The chair is the presiding officer at the meetings who coordinates all activities of the committee. The chair is selected from among the full time faculty members serving on the committee. The term of the chair is one year.

The Chair is elected near the end of every academic year, in April. Faculty who currently serve on the AC shall be eligible to vote. All full time faculty who are current members of the AC are eligible to be nominated for AC chair. Candidates for the position of chair shall be nominated by members of the committee and be willing to serve. If more than one candidate is nominated and accepts, elections shall be by secret ballot; if, however, only one candidate is nominated and accepts, confirmation of that person's election shall take place by voice vote unless any member wishes to have a secret ballot on the candidate. Self-nominations will be accepted.

The AC secretary and the ex-officio members will handle the nominations and voting process and will count the ballots, if necessary. The new chair will be announced as soon as the votes are tallied. The new chair will begin his or her responsibilities in August. If the chair position changes hands due to an election, the outgoing chair will work with the incoming chair during the summer to ensure a smooth transition. In order to be elected chair, the AC member must receive the votes of a majority of the quorum. The term of the AC chair shall not exceed two consecutive years.

Since the chair will only vote in the case of a tie, that person's division must elect a new representative to the committee to act as the voting member for that division.

In general the chair serves as a meeting facilitator. The chair will prepare the agenda for each meeting based on input from committee members, college faculty and the college community. The chair is responsible for: 1) maintaining and disseminating a list of current committee members, 2) maintaining the assessment website, 3) overseeing the production of the *Assessment Quarterly*, 4) oversee the

assessment of the LOs, & 5) coordinate (in cooperation with the CAS chair) the fall and spring best practices workshops. In addition the chair serves as the committee's liaison to CAS and will attend CAS meetings with a report from the AC.

If the chair is unable to fulfill his/her duties a new election may be held mid-year. Until the election results are in, the vice-chair will preside over the AC.

B. Vice Chair. The vice chair is elected by the committee every year during April from AC faculty representatives. Hence, the term of the vice chair is one year. The vice chair assists the chair, serves as chair in his/her absence, and serves as co-chair of the ad hoc committee with the vice chair of CAS as related to the LOs.

The vice chair shall vote in all elections and decisions by the committee except when serving as chair.

The vice chair shall be elected from among the full time faculty members on the committee. Candidates for the position of vice chair shall be nominated by members of the committee and be willing to serve. If more than one candidate is nominated and accepts, election shall be by secret ballot; if, however, only one candidate is nominated and accepts, confirmation of that person's election shall take place by voice vote unless any member wishes to have a secret ballot on the candidate. Self-nominations will be accepted. In order to be elected, the member must receive the votes of a majority of the quorum. The term of the AC vice chair shall not exceed two consecutive years.

However, should the sitting vice chair for any reason be unable to serve a full term, a new vice chair shall be elected to serve the remainder of that term. Until a new vice chair is elected, the chair shall appoint an interim vice chair.

C. Members of the Committee.

1. Instructional Services. Each of the academic divisions under the Dean of Instruction shall elect one fulltime and one adjunct faculty member to serve a two-year term on the Assessment Committee. These elections may take place in April or August, whichever is more convenient for the individual divisions. Division chairs shall be responsible for conducting elections and for reporting the results to the chair of the AC, but only faculty shall vote. Fulltime faculty shall vote for the full time representative and adjunct faculty shall vote for the adjunct representative. To assure continuity, the HFA, HHS, and TECH divisions shall elect representatives in even-numbered years, and the BUS, MS, and SBS divisions in odd-numbered years. However, whenever a new chair of the AC is elected, the division represented by that person shall elect a replacement. If any elected

representative resigns for any reason before the end of the representative's term, a replacement shall be elected to serve the remainder of that term, following which another election shall take place on the regular schedule. (In 2004, all divisions will hold elections with members from BUS, MS & SBS serving a special one-year term until 2005.) Elections in divisions will rotate with the elections for CAS.

In addition to these elected faculty, other full time or adjunct faculty may choose to join the committee or in some cases (e.g., where they would bring special expertise or experience useful to the committee) may be recruited, providing (a) that no academic division would be unreasonably over-represented by their inclusion, and (b) that the elected faculty consent to their inclusion. Faculty who are added to the committee in this manner shall have the same rights and privileges as other members. They shall serve two-year terms.

2. Academic Support. The academic division under the Dean of Academic Support shall elect at least 1 person to serve a two-year term. This member shall have the same rights and privileges as other members, and if faculty, may serve as Chair or Vice Chair.
3. Ex officio members are non-voting members. These include:
 - Vice President of Instruction
 - Director of Institutional Research
 - CAS Chair
 - Dean of Instruction
4. Student Services. Student services shall elect one person to serve a two-year term. This member shall have the same rights and privileges as other members, except that this person may not serve as chair or vice chair.
5. Other Members. Additional members may be drawn from other areas of Instructional Services, including administrators, advisors, etc., so long as the total composition of the committee still reflects the primary role of faculty in assessment activities. These members may choose to join the committee or may be recruited, providing (a) that no academic division would be unreasonably over-represented by their inclusion, and (b) that the elected faculty consent to their inclusion. Members who are added to the committee in this manner shall have the same rights and privileges as other members except that they are not eligible to serve as chair or vice chair. These members shall serve two-year terms.

6. Secretary. The secretary will take minutes of each meeting, maintain a record of the meetings and will assist the chair with preparing the agenda. The secretary does not vote on matters brought before the AC or in the election for AC chair or vice chair.

IV. Committee Procedures.

- A. The guidelines of the committee shall be available to any interested person.
- B. The committee shall meet on a regular schedule. At the beginning of each semester, the chair shall publish a calendar of meeting dates for that semester and send appointments to the committee members. However, in exceptional cases due to exigent circumstances, the committee may deviate from this published calendar providing sufficient advance notice is published.
- C. The minutes and a tentative agenda shall be provided to all committee members, division chairs, deans and any other interested person. To improve communication, it was suggested that minutes and meeting agendas for both CAS and AC be put on the Intranet a certain, to be determined later, number of days before scheduled meetings.
- D. The session of the committee shall be conducted according to the rules established by *Robert's Rules of Order*, but may be modified by a majority of the committee.
- E. Decisions are by majority vote of the quorum. The presiding officer votes in case of a tie.
- F. A quorum shall consist of 50% of the faculty voting members.
- G. All voting members of the committee should designate alternates that may vote in the member's absence or members may indicate their vote in writing ahead of time by informing the chair. The absentee votes will be tallied unless the issue has been modified or diluted by amendments.
- H. Votes shall be taken on the following issues:
 1. First reading of syllabus
 2. Second reading of syllabus
 3. Adding additional members to the committee
 4. The advice that the AC will give to faculty members when constructing syllabuses.
 5. Offices of chair and vice chair.
 6. Changes to the LOs.

7. Approval of meeting minutes.
- I. To provide for ample consideration, the committee shall require two readings of proposed academic matters brought before the committee. As determined exclusively by a majority of the committee, the requirement of a second reading may be waived.
- J. The outgoing chair of AC, in cooperation with the ex officio members, will produce an annual report tracking AC recommendations on syllabuses, college learning outcomes and general educational assessment.
- K. The Assessment Committee will review syllabuses and advise faculty regarding their assessment content.
- L. Shared Governance of Learning Outcome Statements (LOs): If either CAS or AC initiates a revision of the LOs, the CAS and AC vice chairs will convene an ad-hoc committee composed of interested faculty to make the proposed changes. In order to become effective, any revision(s) must receive the joint approval of both CAS and the AC.

V. Amendments to these Guidelines.

The Assessment Committee Guidelines may be amended by a majority vote of the members of the committee.

Adopted – May 04

Revised – May 05