



Assessment Project Report

Due Date: February 28, 2007

Time Period: Spring 20 06 thru Fall 2006

1. Division Name: Library

2. Type of Assessment: check one box only

- Classroom (one instructor assessing learning in one course)
- Course (multiple instructors assessing learning in the same one course)
- Program (multiple instructors assessing learning in two or more courses)

3. Faculty members who participated in this assessment

Full time: Muriel Mullane, John Chavez, Cinthya Ippoliti, Shelle Witten, Paula Crossman, Dixie Klatt, Pam Rigg, Karen Anderson

4. Learning outcome(s) assessed: Information Literacy

5. Course Prefix and Number(s) where this assessment was implemented:

All courses coming in for library instruction-although we checked the "Multiple instructors assessing learning in the same one course" because our content is the same for all the classes we teach.

6. Attach a completed Course Outcome Guide.

7. What assessment strategy did you use? Attach a copy of the assessment tool.

In the Spring of 2006 faculty designed an activity entitled "Finding an Article". The outcomes identified were:

1. ... use the PVCC Library web site to locate & access article databases
2. ...locate appropriate databases for finding an article
3. ...use relevant search terms to find articles on a research topic.
4. ...critically evaluate results to select articles that support the topic or issue.
5. ...identify elements from an article and/or the article record in a database...MLA

The activity consisted of having students fill in an activity that asked them to utilize a given topic to find an article on that particular topic and fill in information that would help them create an MLA citation.

In the Fall of 2006, we decided to use an exercise which combined all of the outcomes on one sheet that students filled in as they were going through library instruction. The activity was designed to measure how well they grasped concepts such as defining a research question, utilizing correct keywords and evaluating information and was mapped directly onto the Information Literacy outcomes for general education. These are the outcomes that were assessed:

- The student will be able to determine the nature and extent of the information needed.
- The student will be able to access needed information effectively and efficiently.
- The student will be able to evaluate information and its sources critically and incorporate selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.

8. What challenges did you experience implementing this assessment tool?

With the in-class activity, there were several problems. Because it was not a requirement, students did not take it seriously and did not fill in the entire activity or filled it in minimally so we had no way of knowing if they simply didn't care or didn't understand the concepts.

The other issue which surfaced was that because the students were filling in the activity as they were going along, we also had a difficult time determining if they were repeating what they had just heard in class or truly grasped the concepts we presented.

Finally, there was no way to give feedback to students in a timely manner to help them improve or further focus on the areas that we had identified were problematic.

9. How did you analyze the results of your assessment?

We utilized the general education rubric and divided the activity into three sections:

1. Identifying an information need-creating a research question and generating keywords as well as a search strategy
2. Accessing information-filling in book, article and website information
3. Evaluating information-evaluating one of those resources according to given criteria

1. For the most part students were able to come up with fairly substantive questions, although some still put in very general topics like "global warming" and had trouble understanding how to better narrow the topic and explore related issues and keywords to yield an effective research query

2. Again, students were able to determine how to search and identify the various components of the resources they were finding although there was confusion between using the library catalog and the databases and how to navigate tasks such as finding a full-text articles.

3. This was the most problematic area. When the students did fill this out, it was mostly with one or two word answers indicating that they were unable to determine if the article or resource they were evaluating had credible information based on the criteria provided. For the most part, if they found something in a database they said it was credible regardless of the information the resource actually contained.

10. What changes did you suggest and/or implement as a result of this assessment?

In the Spring of 2007 we piloted a new instructional program. This was done on a volunteer basis, and we had 18 English sections participating because English classes represent the bulk of our sessions. For ENG 101, students still came in only once for instruction, but we drastically changed the content and the pace of what we covered so that the focus was more on selecting a topic and understanding the assignment rather than trying to cram all of the information during their first exposure to research.

For ENG 102, librarians see students on two separate occasions. The first session is designed to recap the basics of approaching the research process

such as creating a plan, determining what resources are best depending on the research need and brainstorming about keywords and putting them within a research strategy. During the second session the focus is on searching those resources utilizing the search strategies generated in the previous session, evaluating that information and also briefly dealing with citation and plagiarism issues.

In addition, we are asking all of the students in the English classes to fill out a Research Journal that we will use not only for assessment purposes, but also to determine if this new way of doing instruction was better than the traditional one time library instruction in terms of helping students understand and synthesize the large (and complicated) amount of information we typically present.

We are also asking the students in all our other classes to fill out an Information Literacy questionnaire that is also mapped onto the Information Literacy competencies for general education. We hope that in the future we will be able to use the same tool for assessment no matter what the subject area of the class.

11. How has your understanding of and involvement in assessment been enhanced this year?

By expanding the focus of the instruction program we hope to place assessment in a larger context of helping students get started with the research process as part of their academic career here at PVCC. Assessment is more about making sure that students are grasping concepts and are able to apply them in contexts beyond the library and the classroom in other words incorporating research as part of their lifelong learning rather than move from skill to skill and never make the connections that will truly help them succeed.

12. How has your progress in assessment been limited this year?

The most difficult part about the assessment that we do is that we do not see students on a regular basis so it is still difficult to have an opportunity to follow up with them and address any issues or difficulties that arise.

Another area is that we are still struggling with making sure that we place assessment within the research context of the class the students are taking as opposed to a separate, disconnected entity that has no real meaning.

13. How can additional progress and participation in the assessment of student learning be facilitated?

One way to approach assessment is to think on three basic levels: course or classroom, departmental and college or general education. By trying to integrate each type of assessment into the next, we can ensure that we are creating a meaningful context in which we are truly asking ourselves if our students are learning what we think they are learning. By breaking the idea of assessment down into smaller parts, we can create discrete units which would allow greater flexibility. This would help in maximizing the effectiveness of tools/rubrics utilized, focus on problem areas and a way to accomplish the largest goal (college) in a way that is not overwhelming and can occur in a long-term manner that evolves across a period of time rather than abrupt episodes that are not connected.

Thank you for completing this report. Please send it to your Division Chair by February 28.