

PROGRAM REVIEW AND LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT UPDATE

A periodic report on work and activities from the Office of Academic Program Review and Assessment – Ellen Wentland, Assistant Dean

December 2010

SIXTH EDITION

This is the sixth edition of what is planned as a periodic newsletter. As noted in the first April 2008 edition:

The major goal is to share with the entire campus community the significant work – significant in terms of the commitment of time and effort as well as in the results - that is being done by NECC faculty and administrators on program review and outcomes assessment activities. Individuals from outside NECC have also been engaged, including representatives of area four-year colleges and employers. It is hoped that through sharing, the work that has been done will be supported, and the work that will be done will be encouraged and better informed.

For a detailed list of other purposes, see the first edition at: <http://facstaff.necc.mass.edu/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/fs-pr-0804-newsletter.pdf>

PROGRAM REVIEW & OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT WEBSITE

The Program Review & Outcomes Assessment website (<http://facstaff.necc.mass.edu/faculty-resources/program-review-outcomes-assessment/>) has two major goals:

- To provide guidance and resources to those working on reviews, assessment plans, and assessment activities, and
- To serve as a “public” space for the display of work being done at the college on these two important processes.

One important addition to the website in the past year is a section focusing on institutional level assessment (<http://facstaff.necc.mass.edu/faculty-resources/program-review-outcomes-assessment/outcomes-assessment/institutional/>). Until the fall of 2009, the focus of assessment work at the college beyond the classroom was at the program level. Instructional objectives and learning outcomes were developed by program faculty, and assessment activities proceeded at this program level. To complement this work, a new set of institutional level outcomes was created in the 2008-09 academic year, and work to assess this set of outcomes at the institutional level was initiated.

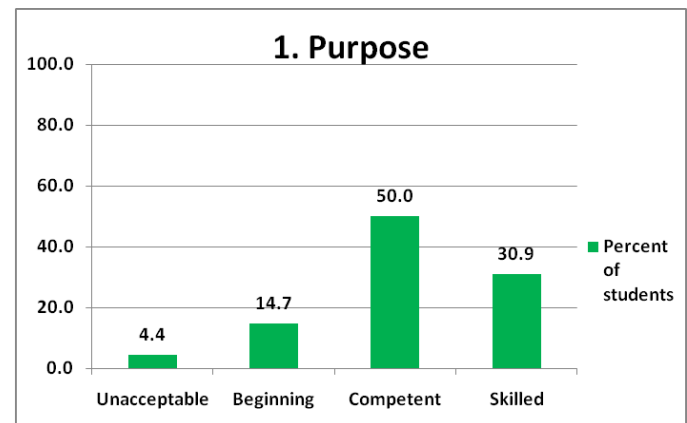
OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

Institutional Level Outcomes Assessment

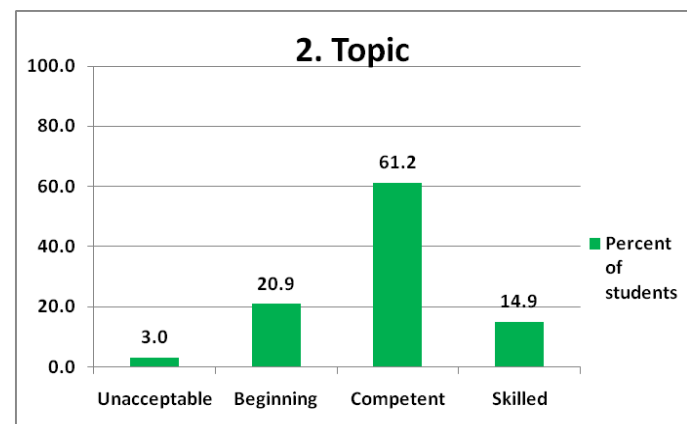
The institutional level outcomes assessment conducted in the 2009-10 academic year focused on the core academic skill of Communication, defined as follows:

- **Communication:** Students will be able to produce clear and well-organized writing using standard American English that thoroughly addresses the assignment and is appropriately geared toward the intended audience.

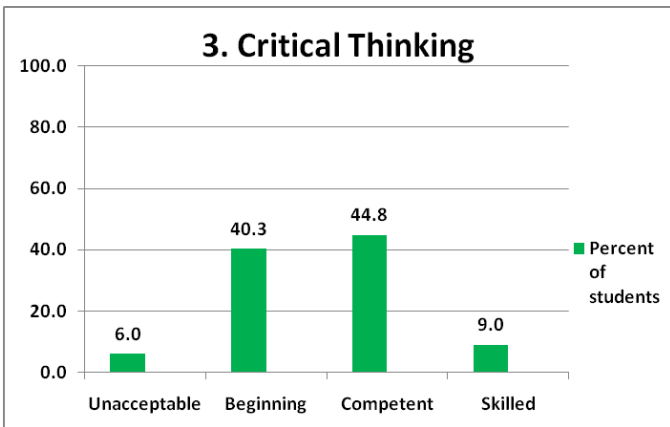
Briefly, students with between 45-50 credit hours earned at NECC were identified, and instructors asked to submit writing samples for these students. These samples were then evaluated by trained raters using a rubric with 7 criteria (<http://facstaff.necc.mass.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/proa-writingrubric.pdf>). The major results by criteria are as follows:



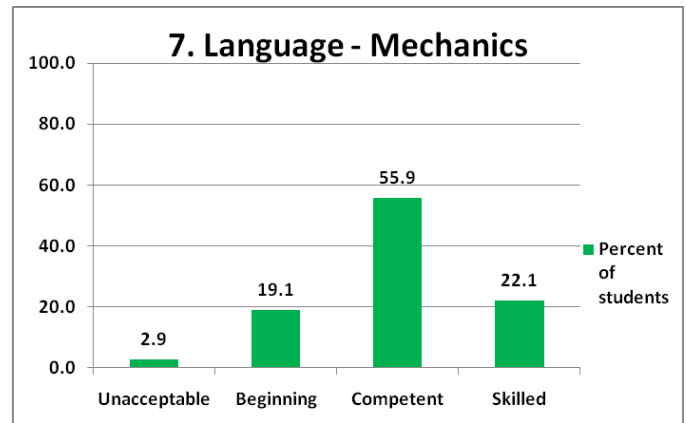
Percent "Competent" or "Skilled" = 80.9



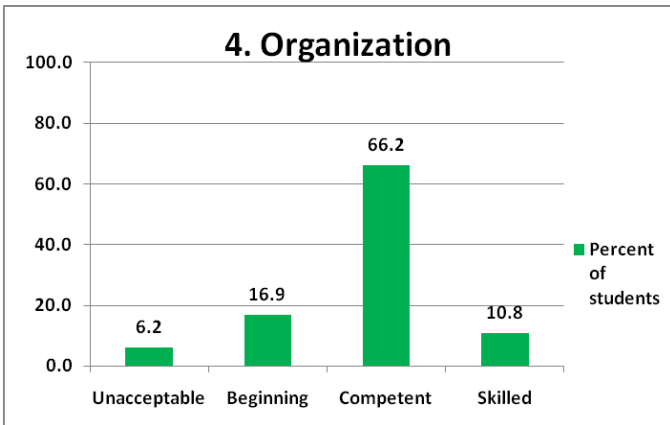
Percent "Competent" or "Skilled" = 76.1



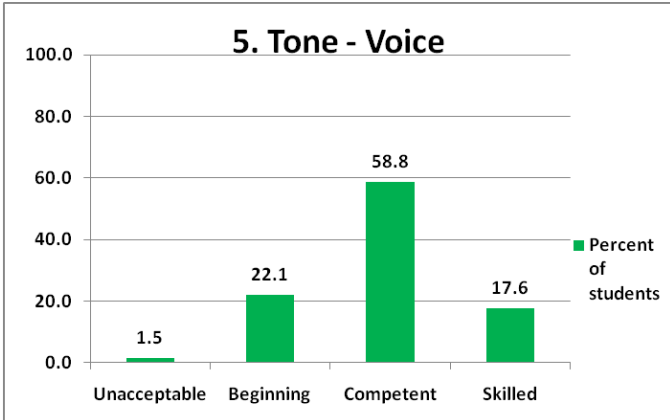
Percent "Competent" or "Skilled" = 53.8



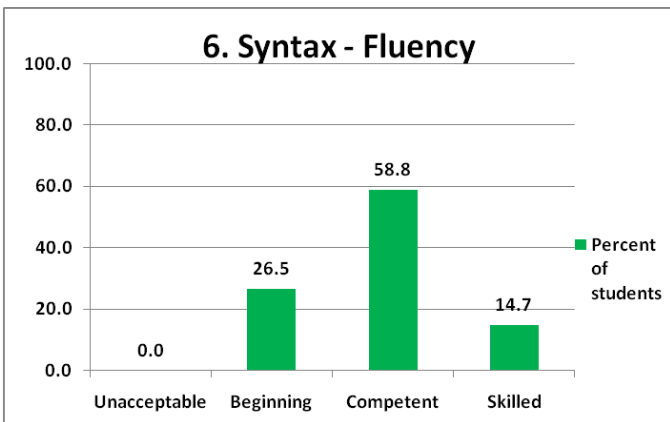
Percent "Competent" or "Skilled" = 78.0



Percent "Competent" or "Skilled" = 77.0



Percent "Competent" or "Skilled" = 76.4



Percent "Competent" or "Skilled" = 73.5

To evaluate whether students had performed at an “acceptable level”, results were compared to faculty set standards, one of which was that at least 80% of students should be rated as “Competent” or “Skilled”. As can be seen from the charts, only with respect to the criterion of “Purpose” was this standard achieved. The complete summary report, in which the process and results are more fully discussed, is available on the Institutional Level Assessment web page referred to above through the following link: <http://facstaff.necc.mass.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/201001-IAR.pdf>.

Future Institutional Assessment Work

Certain observations made following the Writing skill assessment are helping to inform future work. These include:

- The wide variation in the assignment descriptions provided to students made it sometimes difficult for raters to evaluate whether students had satisfied the requirements.
- Without baseline data, it was not possible to reach a conclusion concerning whether students had improved, declined, or stayed the same with respect to writing skills since starting coursework at NECC.
- Without information on the length of time it had taken students to earn their credit hours, we cannot be certain that effects on skills were not from other external factors such as employment experiences.

Some of these areas of concern will be addressed in this academic year's institutional assessment which is focused on Global Awareness and Quantitative Reasoning. The plan is to use a common assignment and to collect data from students with a range of credit hours. Length of time at NECC could also be investigated.

Program Level Outcomes Assessment

The first reviews using the NECC process developed in academic year 2005-06 was completed in academic year 2006-07. By approximately the end of the 2010 calendar year, 29 degree programs and 8 certificate programs will have developed outcomes assessment plans using the NECC process.

Typically, products are collected from identified classes, and evaluated by program faculty. These activities and the resulting action plans are documented in assessment summary reports, which are maintained in binders, copies of which are distributed to the program coordinators, the Assistant Dean of Outcomes Assessment, and the library. Sample reports are also available on the website, as are many of the tools developed by faculty for assessment work.

Outcomes Assessment Summits

The fall Assessment Summits provide an opportunity for faculty who have completed assessment work in the previous academic year to share their methods and results with others. The first annual Assessment Summit was held in the fall of 2007. **Agendas, handouts, and PowerPoint presentations related to each of the four summits held to date are available at:** <http://facstaff.necc.mass.edu/faculty-resources/program-review-outcomes-assessment/outcomes-assessment/program-level/>.

Fall 2010 Presentations

Early Childhood Education – Gail Feigenbaum
Liberal Arts: Biology Option – Ken Thomas
Liberal Arts: Journalism/Communication Option – Amy Callahan
Graphic Design – Marc Mannheimer
Paramedic Technology – Ralph Wade

Fall 2010 Presentation Highlights

Assessment work in 2009-2010 included methods such as embedding questions in tests, rating products using rubrics, rating oral presentations, and compiling results of state administered examinations. Specific highlights from the five presentations and assessment reports are as follows. *Note: The associated images are from the PowerPoint presentations.*

Paramedic Technology

As part of assessment work, the program now maintains information concerning student pass rates on state administered practical examinations.



Based on data collected over the past several years, the data revealed a trend indicating that:

...students are having difficulty passing Station #3 (Random Basic Skills) and Station #5 (IV Therapy) on their first attempt, although all students did eventually and successfully pass all stations. Station #3 is a basic skills station and the paramedic students may have the notion that since they passed it the first time as a basic EMT they do not need to spend time studying it again. But it is obvious they may have forgotten past skills or need to refresh them.

In response to this trend we are providing more lab time, discussion and training directed to stations #3 and #5. In addition, this upcoming year should be a better year as we have been able to add additional personnel, i.e. teaching assistants during lab time to give the students more one on one instruction. Practice is the key to passing any and all of these stations.

Graphic Design

A rubric was created to evaluate students' oral presentations, which were also videotaped for the purposes of student self evaluations.

I (the instructor) have begun to adapt this tool (the rubric) in my other, entry level, design classes as it prepares the students very well for their progress through our curriculum and their subsequent studies or employment. Eventually I would like to see a variation of this tool used in every Graphic Design course we teach. Our whole Design Faculty will look at this in the near future. I feel strongly that this approach and the use of videotaping and individual feedback from their peers and myself prepared our students well to move on.

Early Childhood Education

Seven outcomes were assessed using a 10 criteria rubric applied to students' topic papers. Results were that:

The benchmark identified for our assessment purposes is for 80% of students to score at a satisfactory level of a rating of 3 or higher. This benchmark was achieved for 9 out of 10 criteria assessed ... The analysis indicates that the lowest rating was 78.4% for criteria #9: Source citations in proper MLA format....

The data from this analysis will be shared with faculty and ECE Advisory Committee members. Faculty will discuss options to review MLA format with students when assigning this Topic Paper in the future (i.e., providing the link to the NECC library resources with the assignment instructions.)

Liberal Arts: Biology Option

Lab reports collected from majors in Biology 111 and 112 were evaluated using a 9 criteria rubric focused on outcomes related to research, writing, software, and fluency in the language of the discipline. The action plan includes future data collection as follows:

- Continue to gather lab reports for analysis from BIO 111 & 112,
- Get large enough sample size to compare students in BIO 111 to those in BIO 112,
- Standardize type of lab reports collected to determine if [certain rubric] categorical differences ... are real or an artifact.

Liberal Arts: Journalism/Communication Option

A 7 criteria rubric was used to assess outcomes related to oral communication, media literacy and computer fluency. To assist students in their skill development, Professor Linda Desjardins visited the class to give instruction on effective oral presentation.

Findings included that:

Students met or exceeded expectations in all seven criteria



Strengths:

- Students chose interesting, appropriate topics
- Students understood relevance, significance of their topics
- Students cited their research

Outcomes to improve:

- Deeper investigation into topic
- Better organization of presentation
- Better oral delivery

PROGRAM REVIEWS

Completed To Date

The first reviews following the new process developed in 2005 were completed in the spring of 2006. By the end of the 2010, 38 programs will have completed reviews, with 21 additional programs scheduled to start in the spring of 2011. Of these 21, 7 are programs that will be doing their second review, following the schedule which sets about 6 years between reviews.

Program Reviews in Process

The programs being reviewed and the team leader are:

Business Management: Healthcare Practice
Management Option – Kathy Hudson
CIS: Information Technology Option – Russell Gouveia
General Studies: Multi-Media Option – Patricia Kidney
Engineering Science – Paul Chanley
Liberal Arts: Political Science Option – Steve Slaner
Liberal Arts: Psychology Option – Carolyn Cohen
Liberal Arts: Writing Option – Steve Mathis
Medical Assistant Certificate – Kathy Hudson
Web Page Design and Development Certificate – Ethel Schuster

Program Review Action Plans

The concluding section of a program review is an action plan, designed to address the areas for improvement identified in the review. The plans are posted on the website (<http://facstaff.necc.mass.edu/faculty-resources/program-review-outcomes-assessment/785/>) with status reports updated annually to reflect progress. Below is an example from the Human Services Program:

| Date | Resource Request | Status Report Date | Status |
|--------|---|--------------------|---|
| 1/2008 | Work to improve quality of instructional technology in Spurk Building, including having computer beams in all classrooms. | 2/2010 | Dramatic improvements are underway as many Spurk classrooms were converted into Smart classrooms during the January 2010 semester break. The upgrades are scheduled to continue in summer 2010. |

IMPORTANT - If you are able to help your colleagues by participating on their review teams, please let them know! The schedule is posted at: <http://facstaff.necc.mass.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/proa-mastercal.pdf>

Or contact ewentland@necc.mass.edu.