**Annual Assessment Update (May 2012)**

### Program/department name: Academic Skills Center Academic year: 2011-2012

This form is to be used by programs with previously completed assessment plans. Please address the following areas. You may answer on this form by expanding the space between the steps or on an attachment.

Note: You should fill in steps 1-4 ONLY if you have made changes to your assessment plan. You must fill in steps 5 and 6.

*PLEASE NOTE: Previous ASC assessment plans/reports (plus annual program reports) have presented substantial* indirect *student learning data (including longitudinal data for some areas/aspects of the program), gathered from student usage patterns and student surveys, grade and retention information, etc. The current ASC assessment model is an effort to assess student learning* directly *and across several of the programs and services included within the ASC.*

*This update includes the following new information relative to the May 2011 ASC assessment report*:

**Step 5**

1. Summary and brief discussion of AY11-12 program assessment data from QSC and WC session reports for fall 2011 and spring 2012.

2. Updated LSC assessment information, including AY11-12 program data and discussion based on the current LSC assessment model.

3. Updated discussion about and new findings from an ongoing Writing Center assessment project, which incorporates WC assessment data and qualitative interviews with student consultants.

**Step 6**

4. Updated general discussion about use of assessment data, as internal check on meeting program goals and mission, as well as tentative plans for program development in relation to and as resulting from assessment efforts and findings.

5. Specific discussion about a proposed revision for QSC assessment, to more closely align QSC tutoring learning outcomes with specific Mathematics course learning goals.

# **Step 1: Mission**

Were any changes in your mission adopted during the past year?

\_X\_ No \_\_\_ Yes (Please describe the process used to approve these changes below or on an attachment and attach a copy of the new mission.)

# **Step 2: Learning outcomes**

Were any changes in your learning outcomes adopted during the past year?

\_X\_ No \_\_\_ Yes (Please describe the process used to approve these changes below or on an attachment and attach a copy of the new learning outcomes.)

**Step 3: Program components**

Did you change the program components in which you carry out assessment in any way?

\_X\_ No \_\_\_ Yes (Please describe below or on an attachment.)

**Step 4: Data collection methods**

Did you change your data collection methods in any way?

\_X\_ No \_\_\_ Yes (Please describe below or on an attachment.)

**Step 5: Summary and analysis of data collected during the past year**

Please describe and interpret the indirect and direct data you collected during this academic year.

**A. QSC and WC consultation/meeting reports**

Responses to direct assessment questions on QSC and WC consultation/meeting reports for the academic year were reviewed (separate from the context of other report information) and each set of responses was coded into one of the following categories.

A = indicates evidence of student awareness of learning process options.

B = indicates evidence of student decision making regarding learning and/or learning process.

C = indicates evidence of student application of *improved* decision making in/to learning and/or learning process.

D = no clear evidence indicated and/or incomplete data.

**Analysis of the data from QSC and WC consultation/meeting reports yields the following student learning outcomes for the selected tutoring sessions.**

**QSC/WC SESSIONS** (34% of all report forms analyzed: 233 of 687)

**Category of Percentage of Sessions in Category**

**Student Learning Evidenced QSC WC**

A 56.0 16.1

B 24.0 36.0

C 6.0 36.0

D 14.0 11.8

The report coding process presumes that a tutoring session coded C entails both A & B as well (that is, student learning that evidenced *improved* decision making in/to learning and/or learning process necessarily includes student awareness of learning process options [A] and student decision making regarding learning and/or learning process [B]).

A change in coding procedures this year makes overall comparisons with past years’ data impractical and largely moot (QSC and WC data were analyzed separately this year, in contract to prior years; *in addition, QSC assessment data for the year was incomplete, as briefly discussed in Step 6 below*).

However, coding procedures for WC data were carried out as in past years (the only change being coding of every third session report for analysis—rather than coding all reports individually). The general patterns for WC learning outcomes this year are consistent with past years, with the majority of consulting sessions coded as B or C (36% for both categories this year, compared with category averages of ~40% for the previous two years), and significantly smaller percentages of consulting sessions coded at the margins, as A or D (16.1% and 11.8 %, respectively).

Despite some confusion with the assessment data and coding procedures this year—and acknowledging a likely need to change the QSC model (as mentioned early in this update, and discussed in Step 6 below)—the student learning data collected this year (especially in conjunction with specific tutor commentary and feedback for QSC and WC sessions) provide valuable and useful information as we evaluate the effectiveness of, and consider changes in delivery and tracking of our student academic support programs. In addition, assessment efforts seem to be yielding helpful program information about tutor teaching and effectiveness in the QSC and WC—factors we plan to develop more fully in our assessment efforts in the future (*see discussion of ongoing WC research project in sections 5 and 6 below*, *one effort to more fully understand the work of writing tutors, and to help the tutors themselves gain understanding about the teaching, learning, and leadership work they do as writing consultants*).

In August 2012, the QSC & WC Directors will meet to review, analyze, and discuss the collected QSC and WC assessment information and data. At that time, we will also review and revise/adapt our data collection instruments in each area as appropriate (and perhaps in collaboration with student tutors, as feasible).

**B. LSC consultation/meeting reports**

LSC consultation/meeting reports for the academic year were reviewed (separate from the context of other report information) and each set of meeting reports was coded as one of the following categories (the same rating scale as used during AY10-11).

A = indicates evidence of student awareness of the learning process and options they may

utilize to reach their stated goals. (Student has not indicated a willingness to undertake change.)

B = indicates evidence of student decision making regarding learning and the learning process. (Student may indicate recognition of need to make changes to improve academic performance. Student may report attempts to change behavior based on previous meetings; may take initial steps to act on meeting recommendations.)

C = indicates clear evidence of student making decisions about academic activities in order to improve performance. (Student independently initiates and carries through on changes in behavior. Student reports utilizing new strategies and may work at refining them with the

specialist.)

D= students’ work with specialist may focus primarily on maintaining academic performance and

require learning assistance due to health or emotional issues.

Two new student groups are included in this year’s LSC assessment report: former IDY 100 students who continue to utilize assistance from Dr. Wolf and first-year students on probation. Former IDY 100 students were previously included in the overall IDY 100 category (see last year’s report for comparison). During spring semester 2012, all first-year students on probation who were not in IDY 100 met with Dr. Schwartz.

The following table provides a summary of the category ratings of student learning for each of the six student group meeting types conducted by LSC learning support specialists.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 1: Categories of Student Academic Strategy Learning** | | | | | |
| **Student Groups [[1]](#footnote-1)** | **#** | **A**  Student aware of options | **B**  Indicates need to change | **C**  Independently initiates change | **D**  Maintain academic performance |
| General Students | 21 | 3 | 6 | 12 | 0 |
| Conditional Admission Students | 34 | 8 | 19 | 6 | 0 |
| IDY 100 Students | 24 | 2 | 6 | 14 | 2 |
| Former IDY 100 Students | 12 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 5 |
| Students with Disabilities | 54 | 3 | 8 | 16 | 27 |
| FY Students on Probation | 14 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 0 |
| **TOTAL** | **159** | **20** | **47** | **57** | **34** |
| Avg # of Mtgs | 6 | 3 | 5 | 11 | 3 |

Discussion

Students who had the highest average number of meetings (11) with a learning specialist were those who were rated as making academic changes independently (*see Table 1 above*). This result may reflect the extent of effort, commitment, and time required for students to arrive at this point. In contrast, those students who initiated no change and were only made aware of options had the lowest average number of meetings (3); this low meeting average was matched by those students who were using LSC help to maintain academic performance.

A high percentage of students from the general student group were rated as initiating independent academic changes (57%; *see Table 2 below for this and following data discussed*). Students who make appointments for academic assistance are highly likely to be motivated to make these changes. Many of these students are upper-class students who already have college level study skills and are interested in improving their academic performance.

Students from the IDY 100 group were also likely to make independent change in study methods (58%; see table below). This is likely the result of the intensity of the program, including the required study time and the frequent meetings these students have with Dr. Wolf. This result certainly underscores the extent of effort required by LSC staff to assist these students in making positive, permanent change in their academic performance.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 2: % of Academic Change Category by Student Group** | | | | | | |
|  | General | CAP | IDY 100 | Former IDY | Disabilities | FY Probation |
| Aware of Options | 14 | 23 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 21 |
| Need to Change | 28 | 56 | 25 | 17 | 15 | 42 |
| Initiates Change | 57 | 18 | 58 | 33 | 30 | 36 |
| Maintenance | 0 | 0 | 8 | 41 | 50 | 0 |

In contrast, a smaller percentage of first-year students on probation who met with Dr. Schwartz were assessed as making independent change (36%, *as indicated in Table 2 above*). On average, these students met fewer times than the IDY 100 group and were not required to take part in any formal programming. Although they were urged to use the Wesley Study Area and the mentors, few of them did so.

The first semester students in the Conditional Admission Program had the lowest percentage of students assessed as recognizing and independently carrying out academic change (18%). This is to be somewhat expected, given that—as first semester students—these students are adjusting and assessing the need for change. Consequently, this group had the highest number of students rated as recognizing the need for change but not yet initiating academic change independently (56%). While these students were required to meet with mentors once a week, they averaged just 3.5 meetings with Dr. Schwartz during the year. The low meeting rate was due partly to the large number of students in the group (34). After an initial meeting, students were asked to return only when academic difficulties were noted, such as after midterm grades were posted or when faculty members reported difficulty in class.

Students with disabilities were rated most frequently as utilizing LSC assistance for maintenance of academic performance (50%). This rate was followed by students who formerly were in the IDY 100 program (41%).

The most notable finding from this assessment data and discussion is the high rate of initiating change among students in the IDY 100 group and the high average number of meetings these students require. The intensity of this intervention may suggest a similar need for increased staff and support contact for some of the students in the CAP program and the first-year probation students.

**C. Writing Center Assessment Research Study**

The ongoing WC assessment research project—which began during spring 2011—is designed to study the embedded writing consulting assessment model initiated in fall 2009, and has the following traits (method, goals, and key findings of study).

METHOD

Compare student consultant-written assessment reports with follow-up interviews about sessions; compare student-client evaluation/feedback forms with consultant session reports and interviews (new 2012 component of study).

PROJECT GOALS

* + test validity of session assessment reports
  + check for other learning outcomes
  + enrich understanding of complex writing & learning work that occurs in WC sessions

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In February 2012, the WC director collaborated with two student consultants to select ~30 WC session reports (from fall & early spring semester sessions); using interview questions developed during the first phase of this study (spring 2011), student consultants interviewed their colleague writing consultants who had written the selected session reports (with special focus on ~15 sessions); following the interviews, the three co-researchers met to review, discuss, and analyze interview notes, with the goal of synthesizing preliminary findings from the research interviews. In addition, the researchers added student-client written evaluation/feedback as a third element and comparison data set. (Earlier plans to include interviews with student-clients were not feasible, given time constraints.) Finally, the three researchers presented their second phase study findings at the 2012 East Central Writing Centers Association Conference (in March, at IUPUI in Indianapolis). Early in fall 2012, the WC director and returning student researcher will present the ongoing study to the other consultants, both as review of what we have done and learned over the past two years and as a means to launch the next phase of the study.

NEW RESEARCH FINDINGS

In addition to key research findings from the first phase of study (during spring 2011; findings reported in May 2011 assessment report), several major new concepts emerged from the ongoing study. The following discussion focuses briefly on three of these areas—as consultants and student-clients responded to targeted questions—which seem especially important in relation to student learning during WC sessions:

* + bonding between consultants and clients
  + expectations of both consultants & clients
  + mixed signals, miscommunication during consulting session

KEY RESEARCH DETAILS/DISCUSSION

**Bonding between consultants and clients: why does bonding help?**

* Consultants can help clients easier when they understand the client’s feelings about writing (and sometimes other parts of life)
* Clients can feel at ease knowing their consultant understands the feelings the clients are going through
* Sometimes taking the time to ask, “how do you feel about this paper?” helps a great deal
* In short, this *affective* aspect of consulting sessions can be important for learning to take place during the sessions (and so should be included as key element of staff education).

**Expectations of both consultants & clients**

* Both consultant and the client come to a session with expectations
* Sometimes a client walks in only expecting a grammar check, and walks out with a newly organized, better paper
* Sometimes a consultant expects a simple grammar check, and makes a human connection
* Consultants should be attuned to these expectations (on their part and from clients) and respond accordingly (another element of staff education to be emphasized as needed).

**Mixed signals, miscommunication during consulting session**

* Consultants left some sessions feeling defeated, unsuccessful, worried they had disappointed their client; however, student evaluations indicated general satisfaction with the peer-editing received
* Some clients came in with very clear ideas but were unable to communicate these; consultants in these cases were confused, and struggled to find any sense of accomplishment from the session
* Communication is key to the human interaction that is a writing session; accordingly, strategies for communication should be an integral element of staff education.

**What did we learn from pilot study?**

* We were able to verify, check and challenge our assessment data, the WC assessment plan, and program goals.
* We gained a greater sense of the *active nature of WC sessions*: mutual learning, negotiation between writer and consultant, etc.
* We gained descriptive tools, frameworks for understanding WC work and learning, and for revising the research study and research goals.
* The ongoing study highlights the value of consultant conversations and reflection (one-on-one, individual, whole group); we plan to incorporate the study—its goals, methods, and findings—as ongoing element of staff education and professional development, as well as program research.

**Step 6: Use of the data**

Please describe how you used assessment data in this academic year, including any changes you have made or plan to make to your program as a result of assessment.

* In general, as we determine and refine best practices for ASC program assessment design, as well as data collection, analysis and discussion, we will continue developing systematic learning outcome models and/or analysis strategies for the varied academic support areas within the ASC.
* As noted near the start of this update, the QSC will implement a new assessment model starting in fall 2012: the proposed model includes changes designed to more closely align QSC tutoring learning outcomes with specific Mathematics course learning goals.

The assessment model/tool currently in use employs general questions about the work accomplished with the student, and is meant to be completed after each meeting with a student (the model was largely adapted from a general learning center outcomes model). While the current model and tool seem adequate overall, given the fact that the vast majority of students visiting QSC are enrolled in introductory level mathematics courses, it may make more sense to use an assessment model and specific tools that tie to the specific learning goals and objectives of those courses. This would allow us to give more useful feedback to faculty in the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, as well as help the QSC refine programming to respond to patterns or concerns that may arise in our attempts to support students as they work to meet the learning goals.

Thus, we will be piloting a revised assessment form in fall 2012 that will incorporate specific learning goals from the introductory mathematics courses, so that we will be able to monitor which objectives are being addressed, and how these are being addressed in QSC tutoring sessions. Our plan is that tutors will complete these forms at the end of each tutoring shift instead of after each meeting with a student. By requiring only one form per tutor per shift, we will be able to get an overall snapshot of the work done during the series of sessions with a lesser time commitment from those completing forms and those analyzing forms. Hopefully, this revised model will result in a higher completion rate for the assessment forms, and timely feedback for the faculty teaching Mathematics courses.

* In addition, all ASC professional staff will be involved in ongoing discussions to determine and implement appropriate assessment and/or program revisions and updates. At a staff meeting early in fall semester 2010, discussion focused on review of the ASC 2010 Assessment Report, and especially on the following questions:

*What surprised you about ASC assessment report?*

*What do you see as significant assessment successes?*

*What do you see as significant assessment challenges?*

*What additional/different information might be included in future ASC assessment efforts, plans, or reports?*

We had a helpful, engaged group discussion about program assessment at that meeting (and at following staff meetings that year), and plan to conduct similar exercises early in the 2012-2013 academic year.

* ASC student employees will be involved in reviewing program assessment as well, in more limited capacity, closely related to their specific area of ASC tutoring or other work. For example, Writing Center consultants have been asked to provide feedback about data coding of specific WC sessions. (This was done as part of WC staff education, when we also discussed what the assessment reports told us about the work we were doing with student writers, and what we might learn from this information, how we might want or need to change our tutoring practices, etc.) For the past two years, writing consultants have also acted as researchers and/or participants in the WC interview project (discussed in Step 5 above and just below). ASC student employees will continue to provide assessment feedback in these two areas, with additional student feedback likely in other ASC program areas in near future.
* The Writing Center assessment research study will continue next year, starting in fall semester 2012 (with new consultants as co-researchers and study participants). In addition, we plan to bring all WC consultants into the ongoing research conversation: so that the study becomes *action research* for WC professional development (learning and doing, and reflecting on one’s learning and doing). As suggested under Step 5 above, this research project continues to yield helpful and challenging findings: the project highlights the importance of *structured* consultant conversations and reflections as part of staff education, and provides additional and valuable staff education and professional development opportunities. Future phases of the study will likely include student writer interviews (individual or focus group), so that we can gain a clearer and richer sense of the learning that students develop through their writing consulting sessions.
* Finally, data collected from ASC consultation/meeting report forms—direct evidence of student learning and/or student awareness of learning process options—will be reviewed by program staff in conjunction with other ASC *indirect* student learning measures (post-meeting questionnaires, student usage data, student retention and grade information, etc.). Our hope is that combining these two data streams will provide more holistic and useful measures for assessing effectiveness of ASC program and services; these measures should, in turn, provide us with evidence for continuing or adapting current practices or services, as well as evidence for suggesting new areas for ASC programs and services that would fit with our overall program mission of helping students learn inside and outside of classroom settings.

1. LSC staff meet with students individually to address a variety of academic issues; the meetings this year have been grouped into the following student categories:

   1. Students seeking general academic assistance. They may be referred by faculty coaches or staff members. Typical requests are for assistance with improving academic performance in a single course, general assistance with time management and planning or study strategies.
   2. First year students who are part of the conditional admission program. These students are monitored and, if academic issues arise, they may have a series of meetings to follow their progress.
   3. Students who are on terminal probation and are enrolled in IDY 100 meet with Dr. Wolf for study skills monitoring.
   4. Students who have been in the course in previous semesters who are again experiencing academic issues may also elect to have a series of meetings with Dr. Wolf.
   5. Students with disabilities may request to meet with a learning specialist to improve or adapt study strategies, time management and organization, or for monitoring of specific issues related to their disability.
   6. First-year students who are on semester or academic probation.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-1)