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Academic Assessment Update

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ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT UPDATE

In this edition of the newsletter, we offer perspective on receiving feedback from the peer-review process, provide details on how peer-review feedback will be distributed, highlight implications for assessment in our upcoming SACSCOC reaffirmation visit, update you on General Education Redesign activities, celebrate the success of one of our core courses, and introduce the newest members of the IAA team.

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From the Assessment Coordinator

Processing Peer-review Feedback

IAA is very close to wrapping up the peer-review process for academic programs and core courses for the 2019-2020 academic year, and feedback from the peer-reviewers will be hitting your inboxes soon. So, I wanted to take this opportunity to offer a few thoughts about processing peer-review feedback.

We all like to make A's, particularly when we have put in significant effort on a challenging task. I think it is easy to get caught in the trap of seeing anything less than "exemplary" as a personal failure. So, a few things to consider to help keep peer-review feedback in perspective:



- **When it comes to assessment, there is no "finished."** Our whole philosophy of student learning assessment hinges on "continuous improvement," meaning even a top score does not mean you are finished. There are always ways to improve our processes and to better prepare our students for their future lives and careers. When reviewing your feedback, look for the suggestions that will be most meaningful to your course, program, faculty, and students. Prioritize those suggestions as part of your action plan for the next time around.
- **It's really not about you; it's a collaboration.** We rely heavily on our academic program and core course coordinators for organizing the assessment process from start to finish, compiling all the data, and submitting a finished document on time, but this is not (or should not be) a solo activity! The assessment document should reflect the contributions of all of the faculty involved in teaching that course or program. The feedback is not targeted at a specific author, but is meant to direct the joint efforts of the entire program or course faculty.
- **Everyone is a beginner before they become exemplary.** Sometimes, "beginning" or "developing" is exactly where you should be. If you are working with a brand new course, program, or assessment process, "beginning" might be an accurate description of where you are right now -- and that's okay! We all have to begin somewhere. By the same token, if you're still refining your student learning outcomes or your assessment instrument, then you are "developing." It's fine to be at these stages, just make sure you have a plan for progressing in future assessment cycles.

- **If it's unclear, ask.** Our peer-reviewers are humans, just like you. They are faculty who serve on committees and complete the peer-review of up to a dozen assessment documents on a tight deadline on top of their regular teaching responsibilities. So, if something in your feedback is unclear, it's not intentional on their part. [Contact us](#) with your questions, and we will help to clarify any feedback that seems confusing.

Keeping these points in mind, this past academic year has presented some challenges that none of us could be fully prepared for, and it has been a steep learning curve across the board. We know that a lot of things -- including assessment -- did not go according to plan. Our peer-reviewers, who are faculty from across colleges and disciplines, were in the same situation and understand that this was an unusual year. The scores and comments that you receive from these reviewers are meant to be understood in that total context. Don't take this feedback on as a personal critique, especially this year. Take on these comments as suggestions for next steps as we all hold out hope for the end of this pandemic and an opportunity to make meaningful improvements to student learning under less difficult circumstances.

And in the meantime, we'd love to hear about what you've learned or what accomplishments you're most proud of while teaching during a global pandemic. Take a moment to [share your thoughts](#) so that we can celebrate with you.

Onwards and upwards!

Jaime

Peer-review Feedback

IAA is in the final stages of compiling and preparing peer-review feedback to send out to core course and academic program coordinators. This year, we will also be preparing a summary of feedback for chairs and deans that will include all academic programs and core courses in their department or college. Watch for emails with your feedback in the next week, and remember to [contact us](#) if you have any questions.

SACSCOC Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Georgia Southern is in the initial stages of preparing for our 10 year reaffirmation of accreditation with SACSCOC. The reaffirmation document will be submitted in Summer 2024 with an on-site visit by the review team in Spring 2025.

SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation Section 8.2.a and 8.2.b. provide the guidelines relevant to academic program and core course assessment:

2. **The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in the areas below:**
 - a. **Student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs.**
(Student outcomes: educational programs)
 - b. **Student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs.**
(Student outcomes: general education)

Reviewers examine academic assessment data most closely for the three years prior to the submission of the reaffirmation document, making 2020-2021 a particularly important assessment cycle for academic programs and core courses. We encourage those who are collecting data and compiling documentation to pay particular attention to the guidelines provided in the [Academic Program Assessment Rubric](#) and [Handbook](#) and the [Core Course Assessment Rubric](#) and [Handbook](#) to ensure that we are in compliance with all SACSCOC standards.

Please note that all academic program and core course assessment documents submitted for the 2020-2021 assessment cycle will be required to use the current template for [academic program](#) or [core courses](#). Any documents submitted that are not in the current template will be returned to the coordinator for resubmission.

Gen Ed Redesign Update

GECC Subcommittees for SLO Development

At the conclusion of the Fall semester, the GECC formed 13 subcommittees in partnership with faculty and staff across the institution to begin the development of a general education mission and to draft student learning outcomes for the new areas of the core curriculum included in the BOR proposal. Each subcommittee is chaired by a GECC member and has been provided with initial resources collected by IAA to inform the SLO development process.

In addition, 34 students have volunteered to participate in a **General Education Redesign Student Working Group**. These students will also serve on GECC subcommittees and will provide additional feedback throughout the process of the redesign.

General Education Student Survey

In Fall 2020, IAA distributed a survey regarding general education and the core curriculum redesign to all students. Questions were similar to those used to prompt discussion in the Town Hall meetings, which were sparsely attended by students. Over 2,000 students responded to the survey, providing additional insights for the core redesign from a student perspective.

Ongoing updates can be found on the [General Education Redesign website](#).

Excellence in Core Course Assessment: CRJU 2010 Universal Justice

Over the past three assessment cycles, CRJU 2010 Universal Justice is a core course that has shown remarkable consistency in assessing student learning, maintaining a high level of faculty collaboration in spite of challenging circumstances. This course falls under Area B of the current core curriculum, aligned to the learning outcome "Students will recognize and articulate global perspectives across diverse societies in historical and cultural contexts." To connect the content of the course to the Area B learning outcome, faculty focus on the theme of human rights, closely examining the emergence of human rights within surrounding cultural values. These



These

rights are connected to the work of the United Nations, International Criminal Court, and other international non-governmental organizations.

This course is regularly offered on the Statesboro and Armstrong campuses, as well as online. Peer-reviewers have specifically commended the faculty for implementing teaching strategies that support student learning relative to the Area B learning outcome while allowing for adjustments to fit the needs of a specific student population and mode of instruction. Faculty across campuses also worked collaboratively to develop a consistent pre/post-test assessment tool applicable to the content of all courses and carefully aligned to course SLOs and levels of Bloom's Taxonomy using a test blueprint.

Using the test blueprint to organize and analyze assessment results, coupled with item analysis to evaluate the strength of each test item, has allowed faculty to develop targeted action plans for the improvement of student learning and the overall assessment process.

The 2019-2020 academic year presented some significant challenges due to changes in faculty teaching the course and the pivot to emergency remote instruction due to COVID-19. In spite of these challenges, assessment coordinator Barb King was able to compile assessment data, with the support of fellow lecturer Eloise Pitt and outstanding adjunct faculty Kristin Watkins and Mark Bodkin. King noted that these faculty have been "exceptional in their commitment to upholding departmental standards and going the extra mile collecting data from their courses."

Even though not all sections participated in assessment due to the unforeseen changes resulting from the pandemic, the solid foundation set in the early stages of planning and implementing assessment has enabled them to sustain this examination of student learning through some of the most challenging times in higher education.

IAA Welcomes New Team Members

We are pleased to introduce two talented graduate students who are joining our IAA team for the Spring 2021 semester.



Shalom Emmanuel joined IAA as a Graduate Assistant in January. Shalom holds a B.S. in Biochemistry from Landmark University in Nigeria and is in the final semesters of her M.A. in Public Health with a focus in Environmental Health Sciences. Her skills with research, data collection, and analysis coupled with her experience as a graduate teaching assistant have equipped her to support a variety of IAA initiatives and projects.



Kyle Ingram is completing his internship with IAA this semester as a graduation requirement for his M.Ed. in Higher Education Administration. Kyle sought out this internship opportunity to compliment his experience as a Graduate Assistant in Student Activities, diversifying his knowledge and skillset for future career goals. Kyle will be working with the General Education Redesign and preparation for the SACSCOC reaffirmation.

Upcoming Events

**Assessment Document Writers Group
Spring 2021**

[Register](#)

Based on the success of the Assessment Document Writers Group sessions offered during Summer 2020, IAA is offering an [Assessment Document Writers Group during Spring 2021](#). This session will include some asynchronous resources and interaction in Folio.

Workshops offered via Zoom start on Friday, January 15th and will take place every other Friday throughout the semester. You can still participate even if you can't attend the workshops. Recordings will be made available to those with schedule conflicts.

Use the link above to register, and we will follow up with additional details.



Institutional Assessment and Accreditation (IAA) works collaboratively with faculty, staff, and administration to ensure the quality of the programs and educational experiences offered by the university, addressing the unique assessment needs of courses, departments, colleges, or units through individual and group consultations, professional development workshops, recommendations for technology implementation, and best practice reference materials.

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