



**Student Learning Outcomes  
Assessment Plan**  
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## Introduction

### The Student as the Primary Measurement Level

Prince George's Community College (PGCC) is committed to transforming the lives of its students. In order to meet this commitment, the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan at PGCC is focused on the direct measurement of student achievement by collecting data on student learning outcomes (i.e., course outcomes, program outcomes, and core learning outcomes). The data collected directly from students are then aggregated to assess courses, programs, and core learning outcomes. Using student data, PGCC evaluates the educational effectiveness of courses, programs, and divisions, while simultaneously gathering data on student's academic success.

### Academic achievement

Academic achievement at PGCC is defined as successful course completion (i.e., completing the course with a passing grade) and possessing sufficient knowledge and skill to progress to subsequent course(s). Although more distal measures like the completion of a degree will also be examined, the primary focus is on the value added to the life of a student through the completion of each individual course. Thus, academic achievement is about each course providing a rich learning environment that affords students the opportunity to master the student learning outcomes (i.e., course outcomes, program outcomes, and core learning outcomes) of the course and adequately prepare students for subsequent course(s).

### How Assessment Data are used at PGCC

Academic Affairs collects data on student performance for the *sole purpose of improving student success*. The collection of data at the student level allows for the tracking of an individual student or cohorts of students to determine the academic achievement of a student/cohort and to ascertain progress from one course to another. The focus is on student learning outcomes (SLOs) and how those outcomes relate to the likelihood of a student/cohort successfully completing a course and being ready to progress through subsequent courses. Furthermore, the aggregation of data by student learning outcomes (i.e., course outcomes, program outcomes, and core learning outcomes) provides evaluative performance data on individual courses, programs, and institution. **SLO data are never used as an evaluative tool of individual faculty members.**

### Multiple Levels of Assessment

The data collected from courses provide a range of analytic capabilities on three distinct, yet connected sets of learning outcomes (i.e., course outcomes, program outcomes, core learning outcomes). The PGCC Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan is focused on measurement at the course level and the continuous improvement of courses. Through the continual improvement of individual courses the goal is to continually improve the preparation of students such that they achieve course outcomes. The improvement of individual courses and subsequent

student performance will produce a global impact on students at all levels of the institution. Thus, although course outcomes are primarily connected to course level assessment, program outcomes are primarily connected to program level assessment, and core learning outcomes are primarily connected to division and institution level assessment, all of these are based on individual student performance in individual courses. Thus, the PGCC Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan uses direct, authentic measurement of students from classroom assignments to evaluate the effectiveness of all three levels (i.e., course, program, and division/institution).

### *Course Level Assessment*

Course level assessment is performed by aggregating data across all assessed sections of a course. At this level, achieving individual course outcomes is the primary focus, the goal being to identify course outcomes that students are meeting/exceeding and course outcomes for which students are not achieving acceptable levels of performance. The purpose of this level of assessment is to indicate areas in which courses may need adjustments/improvements and to evaluate the effectiveness of adjustments/improvements after they have been made.

### *Program Level Assessment*

Program level assessment is performed by aggregating student performance across coursework. At this level, achieving program outcomes is the primary focus of the analysis. Data across all assessed courses in an area of study are aggregated by program outcomes. This provides performance data on each program outcome, with the goal being to identify program outcomes which students are meeting/exceeding and those program outcomes with which students struggle. The purpose of this level of assessment is to identify where students' performance on program outcomes need to be improved and to identify courses which could be modified to improve that performance. This level of assessment will also provide evidence of programs which are performing well and therefore can be used as models / exemplars.

Some departments offer courses in their discipline as part of the General Education core and not as part of a discipline-specific program. Thus, these courses serve as "service courses;" to other programs. In these instances, departments will primarily focus on the assessment of the course outcomes and core learning outcomes. However, since these courses fill important general education requirements in multiple programs, departments offering these courses can ascertain the impact of their courses by examining the program data in which the service courses are being utilized; this could be a program within or outside of the department in which the course is offered.

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### *Institutional Level Assessment*

Across the institution, the core learning outcomes can be aggregated by examining all coursework in the assessment Plan. Data across all assessed courses are aggregated by Core

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Learning Outcomes, the goal being to identify core learning outcomes that students are meeting/exceeding and those for which students are not meeting acceptable levels of performance. The purpose of this level of assessment is to identify core learning outcome performance which needs to be improved and identify courses which could be modified to improve CLO performance.

### **What a Common Assessment Means**

In order to measure the effect that a course has on a student, there must be consistent measurement of the outcomes of all students who take the assessed course/section. Therefore, “common assessment” at PGCC is designed to ensure reliable and valid evaluation of the students’ attainment of student learning outcomes (i.e., course outcomes, program outcomes, and core learning outcomes). To accomplish this, common assessments are embedded in all sections of a course. These assessment(s) **must measure all of the learning outcomes associated with that course (i.e., course outcome, program outcomes, and core learning outcomes). In order to address all outcomes more than one assessment may be necessary. The Common assessment(s) is expected to be completed towards the end of the course.**

### *Student Learning Outcomes*

Data are obtained on all student learning outcomes (i.e., course outcomes, program outcomes, and core learning outcomes) through a careful alignment of coursework and outcomes. Through a curriculum mapping process, PGCC faculty have identified a meaningful set of sequential courses in each program. This sequence provides the map to move students from entry into the program to higher levels of skills, knowledge, and understanding. Aligning the courses includes aligning the individual outcomes that are addressed in each course. Thus, the outcomes for a single course are tightly connected to the outcomes for subsequent courses in the sequence. Additionally, program outcomes and core learning outcomes are connected to related course outcomes in a single matrix such as to ensure that all student learning outcomes (i.e., course outcomes, program outcomes, and core learning outcomes) are measured for the course.

To cover all of the course learning outcomes, there are two options. The first, and preferred methodology, is that there is only one common assessment per course with multiple content domains. An alternative methodology is that a course has multiple common assessments embedded with each assessment addressing one or more outcomes.

### *Outcomes and Content Domains*

Every assessment will have content domains. A content domain represents a group of assessment items with well accepted boundaries and structure. The student learning outcomes (i.e., course outcomes, program outcomes, and core learning outcomes) help to define the content objective. As an example, PSY 1010 has the course outcome “use critical and creative thinking, skeptical

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inquiry, and, when appropriate, the scientific approach to solve problems related to behavior and mental processes.” Data which are obtained for this course outcome simultaneously provides information on one of the program outcomes for Psychology, “use the scientific method as a primary basis for engaging in critical thinking” as well as on CLO7, “reason abstractly and think critically.” These are all within the same content domain of critical thinking. Student performance on a single domain is recorded by a set of questions on an exam focused on related content, a score for one section of a rubric, or any set of items that address the content domain.

#### *Common Assessment NOT Common Assignment/Exam*

Having a common assessment across all sections of a single course can mean having a common assignment or common exam across all sections of a course; however, this is not required. What is required, is that the common assessment for a given course measures the same set of knowledge, skills, and/or values and that the assessment is graded consistently. The common assessment should be created in such a way that faculty, in their individual sections, can fulfill the requirements of the assessment but still maintain flexibility in assessment processes in the classroom.

#### *Consistent Grading*

No matter the format of the common assessment, the evaluation of the students’ performance must be consistent to be valid. For the common assessment, all faculty must follow consistent guidelines for evaluating student performance so that all sections of a course are being evaluated in an identical way. While this could take the form of a common multiple choice exam, there are a range of assignments which can have multiple correct answers (e.g. essays and papers). In order to obtain high levels of reliability for these types of assignments (e.g., essays and papers) they will need to be evaluated with a common scoring guide (e.g., rubric or checklist).

#### *Common Scoring Guide*

The common assessment for each course must be focused on measuring the outcomes addressed in the course. As such, any assignment designated as a common assessment needs to be identical in the knowledge, skills, and values it assesses and similar in level (e.g., Blooms Taxonomy / Marzano’s New Taxonomy). The length of the assignment and depth of processing required to complete the assignment must be similar, and the knowledge, skills, and values must be identical. This is accomplished by using a range of different assignments, graded using a common scoring guide, that are focused on measuring the identical knowledge, skills, and values. Therefore, the common scoring guide would be used to evaluate students’ attainment of the content domain, while the individual assignments would vary across sections.

### ***Exams with Content domains and Varying Questions***

Many exams are compiled from a test bank. It is possible to give a test with varying questions and still address identical content domains. Similarly, it is possible to vary questions *within content domains*. For example, if on a test, questions 1-5 are about critical thinking, then the 15 questions from the test bank about critical thinking can be varied within this 1-5 question space. Again, the question level should be identical in the knowledge, skills, and values they assess and similar in level (e.g., Blooms Taxonomy / Marzano’s New Taxonomy).

### ***Additions to Common assessment (but not subtraction)***

While faculty members are not required to use identical assignments for common assessment in a particular course, an individual faculty member cannot remove aspects of his/her common assessment assignment that relate to the content domains being assessed. For example, building on the scenario found in the *Outcomes and Content Domains* section above, a faculty member teaching Psychology 1010 cannot remove any aspect of his/her assignment that was intended to supply data for the assessment of the “critical thinking” domain. However, the faculty member can feel free to add aspects/requirements to his/her assignment that are unrelated to the content domains being assessed. For instance, even though there may not be a learning outcome in Psychology 1010 related to source documentation, a faculty member can feel free to add requirements about APA documentation style to the assignment and may assess the student’s mastery of this skill when grading the assignment.

Modifications to the common assessment that will affect the content domains being assessed can only be done through departmental action (discussed below), as such changes would impact the validity and reliability of measuring the student’s attainment of the outcomes.

## **The Assessment Process**

### **Structure**

#### **Academic Affairs Assessment Committee (AAAC)**

The Academic Affairs Assessment Plan is overseen by the Academic Affairs Assessment Committee (AAAC). The committee is composed of faculty and staff in other positions identified as key to the success of the assessment Plan.

Seat	#	Representing / Role
1. Academic Affairs Assessment Coordinator	1	Chair
2. Faculty member*	1	Vice-Chair
3. Director of Institutional Assessment	1	OPAIR
4. Two faculty members from each division who also serve as Chair of their Departmental Assessment Team	10	Faculty / Discipline

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5. Honors Program (representative)	1	Honors Courses
6. "General Education Coordinator"	1	Gen. Ed Courses
7. eLearning / Blackboard	1	Software integration
* <i>also sits on Academic Council</i>	16	

**Responsibility of AAAC**

The AAAC meets monthly with the primary responsibility of ensuring that the SLO Assessment System at PGCC is functioning and is part of a process of continual improvement. The AAAC is charged with evaluating the effectiveness of the Assessment Plan and to address issues and concerns. The primary responsibility of the AAAC is to ensure the continued improvement of the plan such that it produces the needed evaluation of student success in the least burdensome manner possible. The secondary purpose of the AAAC is to aid stakeholders in interpreting the data from the annual reporting cycle. This could include further analysis or interpretation of data and reporting of that data to chairs, deans, administrators, or other PGCC stakeholders. Also, as part of the oversight of the assessment plan, the AAAC is responsible for reviewing the course learning outcomes of proposed new courses and any changes to program curriculum maps.

**Departmental Assessment Team (DAT)**

**Requirements**

Every department is represented by a Departmental Assessment Team (DAT) composed of at least three faculty members. This team is responsible for ensuring that the cycle of continuous improvement is carried out with fidelity in the departments it represents. In some cases, each department in a division has its own DAT, but some smaller departments might choose to be part of a combined DAT. In these circumstances, a single DAT oversees the processes for more than one department.

**DAT: Service to AAAC**

For each division, two DAT chairs also serve on the AAAC. In divisions in which there are more than two DATs, two of the DAT chairs are selected to serve on the AAAC. Each division is responsible for establishing procedures to identify fairly the members who serve on the AAAC.

**DAT: Improvement Plan**

The DAT is responsible for documenting the continuous improvement cycle and coordinating the implementation of course modifications for each program and/or service course(s) in the Department it represents. Documentation of the continuous improvement cycle is primarily addressed by the completion of a yearly improvement plan for each department. This process includes the following: an evaluation of the course level and program level (CLO data for service courses) summary data (Annual Course Assessment Report described below), identification of an area for improvement (AFI), the creation of an intervention/strategy to overcome the AFI, and

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training of faculty to insure implementation with fidelity of the intervention and all assessment procedures.

## The Process

### Faculty

All teaching faculty at PGCC are responsible for ensuring that the Assessment Plan is implemented in their course work with fidelity. This means, first and foremost, that the course content is guided by the course outcomes. Second, faculty are responsible for ensuring that any common assessment in the course is appropriately embedded into the course and assessed as a regular component of the course. Finally, faculty whose courses are part of the assessment cycle are responsible for inserting the evaluation data for the common assessment into the electronic assessment plan.

### Academic Affairs Assessment Coordinator

All data from assessments come to the Academic Affairs Assessment Coordinator through the electronic assessment plan. On August 1 of each year, the Academic Affairs Assessment Coordinator is responsible for producing a summary of the assessment data, the Annual Course Assessment Report (A-CAR). The A-CAR provides a summary of individual course performance, program performance, and division performance (see Appendix A for a sample). The report is broken down by division, department, program, and course. The entire A-CAR is provided to the VPAA and the section pertaining to a specific department is provided to that department's Chair and the DAT representatives, similarly the section pertaining to a specific Division is provided to the Dean of that division.

## DAT

### Analysis

The Departmental Assessment Team (DAT) is responsible for appropriately disseminating data from the A-CAR to the faculty and receiving feedback about how the faculty wish to address the concerning data. Each department is responsible for developing a vetting mechanism which includes all appropriate faculty and administrators. After decisions have been made by the appropriate faculty, the DAT is responsible for documenting the proposed plan, the Improvement Plan (see template Appendix B). The Improvement Plan documents which area for improvement (AFI), will be the focus of the year's continuous improvement cycle. In addition, the Improvement Plan involves a strategy/intervention to improve the "area" which needs "improvement." By October 15, the DAT submits the Improvement Plan which has been agreed to by the appropriate faculty and administrators, consisting of the identification of the AFI and the strategy/intervention to be implemented, for inclusion in the assessment software.

### *Scope of the Improvement Plan*

It is likely that programs and/or courses and their sequences have multiple areas that need to be improved. At PGCC, the goal is to focus efforts on one or two of the largest concerns each year and improve these before moving onto the next concern. Attempting to address all concerns within a single year is not feasible, and, furthermore, changing too many aspects simultaneously has the high potential of leading to worse outcomes. Therefore, the goal is to make relatively small adjustments to courses, such that all faculty teaching the course are making a universal change. Small changes that are made regularly yield the greatest likelihood of success.

### *Intervention / Strategy*

This strategy/intervention to address the AFI should be an evidence-based practice that will be implemented in the Spring semester. The primary goal is to ensure that it is likely to result in an improvement of the concerning data. The strategy/intervention should be something that can be easily implemented in all sections of the course.

### *Implementation*

The DAT is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Improvement Plan so that it can be incorporated into the identified course(s) in the Spring semester. This would mean that during the Fall semester, the DAT would be responsible for obtaining or creating materials, overseeing the purchase of materials, and/or coordinating the training of faculty on the implementation of the changes to the course. All of these procedures must be vetted through the appropriate administrator(s). The progress of each DAT is reported out at regularly scheduled AAAC meetings.

Assessment Process (Figure)

<b>Faculty (each semester)</b>	
	Faculty assign Common assessment to students
	Faculty/Departments insert grades for the outcomes assessed by the common assessment into the assessment software
<b>Academic Affairs Assessment Coordinator</b>	
	<b>August 1</b> - Analyzes data from the preceding Fall and Spring semester to produce the A-CAR
<b>DAT</b>	
	<b>October 15<sup>th</sup></b> : Inputs the Improvement Plan consisting of the identification of the AFI and the strategy to be implemented into the assessment software <b>Spring Semester</b> – implement intervention/strategy
<b>Continuous Improvement</b>	
From here, the cycle continues with the implementation of the strategy and a new cycle of data collection. The A-CAR report for the following year will include the Fall data set before the strategy was implemented, along with the Spring data demonstrating the impact of the strategy. The DAT and faculty of a department will examine the A-CAR and determine if the strategy was effective and move onto other AFIs or attempt another strategy for the same AFI.	

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## Other Procedures

### Modification of a Common Assessment

Each division is responsible for developing the means by which a common assessment modification is approved. Meetings in which modifications of an assessment are being made must include the AAA Coordinator so that any issues concerning continuity of the data can be considered and appropriately addressed during data summary. The primary purpose of having the AAA Coordinator present during such a meeting is to ensure that changes to the assessment itself, which will likely impact the interpretation in fluctuation of scores in the next A-CAR report, can be appropriately documented and explained.

### If a faculty doesn't complete Assessment (administration or inserting data)

(Needs input)

### Adding / Deleting a Course

(Working with Curriculum Committee about how this would mesh)

Appendix A: A-CAR Sample

Until the specific software is identified, the exact format and level of analysis for the A-CAR has a significant range. It is clear that no matter what the format, there will be Course Level, Program Level, and Institution level reporting, focusing on the success of students aggregated across each of these levels.

Some possible example tables follow:

**Course Level  
Course XXX 9999**

**Course XXX 9999 Outcomes (percentage of student performing at each level)**

Course	Program	CLO	Unacceptable <65%	Acceptable 66-79%	Target 80%+
1	3		40%	50%	10%
2		2	20%	60%	20%
3	8	5	80%	15%	5%
4	1		30	60	10

*This table represents each course outcome (left column) and the students' performance on that outcome in the course. Thus, for course outcome 1, across all assessed sections of the course, 50% of the students made between 66% and 79% on this part of the assessment. Course outcome #, wherein 80% fell into the "Unacceptable" level, would potentially be a candidate for an intervention strategy to improve the percentage of students who score above 65% on this section of the assessment(s).*

**Although these particular ranges have some theoretical underpinnings the final ranges need to be established to determine what is "Unacceptable", "Acceptable," and "Target" performance. Somewhere around 80-90% is generally accepted as mastery and therefore may be a reasonable Target, but defining Acceptable and Unacceptable needs input.**

Course Success Rate for XXX 9999

	W	F	D	A, B , C
For registered	30%	10%	5%	55%
For completers	NA	25%	10%	70%

*This table shows the overall grades for the course including a break-out of students who completed the course, vs. registered but did not complete.*

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At PGCC, the primary goals of each course are to prepare students for the next step in the sequence. As such, courses which lead to other courses can be examined to ascertain the student's performance (e.g., examining students who made an A in EGL 1010, and the grade they received in EGL 1020). Similarly analyses are performed for the course outcomes to ascertain how performance on course outcomes is related to success in subsequent courses.

Student Success for XXX 9999

Grade in XXX 9999	Grade in Y 9999	Number	%
A	A		
	B		
	C		
	D		
	F		
	W		
B	A		
	B		
	C		
	D		
	F		
	W		

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### Program Level

Similar kinds of reporting to that of the course level will be performed for program and Division. The only difference is that the data for the course are aggregated across all assessed sections, and the data for the program would be aggregated across all assessed courses within the program.

#### Program outcomes (% of student performing at each level across all assessed courses in program)

Program	CLO	Unacceptable <65%	Acceptable 66-80%	Target 80%+
1		40%	50%	10%
2		20%	60%	20%
3	5	80%	15	5%
4		30	60	10
5	2	99	99	99

#### Percentage of student performing at each level across entire program

	Unacceptable <65%	Acceptable 66-80%	Target 80%+
Total	86	12	2

#### Course Success Rate for entire Program

	W	F	D	A, B, C
For registered	30%	10%	5%	55%
For completers	NA	25%	10%	70%

**Gap Analysis** (this will vary widely based on the software capabilities) – but the goal will be to identify which courses seem to have the largest gap (meaning passing the previous course in the sequence does not correlate with success in later courses).

### Department Level

[Asummary of Program performance across the department]

CLO performance within the department

CLO	Unacceptable <65%	Acceptable 66-80%	Target 80%+
1	40%	50%	10%
2	20%	60%	20%
3	80%	15	5%
4	30	60	10
5	99	99	99

Percentage of student performing at each level across department

	Unacceptable <65%	Acceptable 66-80%	Target 80%+
Total	86	12	2

Course Success Rate for each program and departmental as a whole

	W	F	D	A, B , C
For registered	30%	10%	5%	55%
For completers	NA	25%	10%	70%

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**Division Level**

[Some kind of summary across Department within the division]

CLO performance within the Division

CLO	Unacceptable <65%	Acceptable 66-80%	Target 80%+
1	40%	50%	10%
2	20%	60%	20%
3	80%	15	5%
4	30	60	10
5	99	99	99

Percentage of student performing at each level across division

	Unacceptable <65%	Acceptable 66-80%	Target 80%+
Total	86	12	2

Course Success Rate for each program, department, and division as a whole

	W	F	D	A, B , C
For registered	30%	10%	5%	55%
For completers	NA	25%	10%	70%

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Appendix B: Improvement Plan Template

**(This will be an electronic form in the electronic assessment data system,**

but these boxes provide a suggestion of the “length” of information which might be expected.

IP for:

Program: \_\_\_\_\_  
in the department of:

Department: \_\_\_\_\_  
in the division of:

Division: \_\_\_\_\_

Identify the Area For Improvement:

--

Indicate the Strategy/Intervention to be used with individual(s) accountable and a basic timeline.

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