

Assessment and Continuous Improvement Office (A+)
College of Arts and Sciences
University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez
Progress Report
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Summary

The assessment initiative in the College of Arts and Sciences began in response to the Middle States 2005 request to design and implement learning assessment plans to further improve the institution's teaching/learning process. The College of Arts and Sciences created The Office of Continuous Improvement and Assessment" directed by associate dean Dr. Mario Núñez and assisted by Dr. Vivian Navas and Dr. Eddie Marrero. Each department then assigned an assessment coordinator to this team. The office coordinates assessment workshops, meetings and mentoring to empower the department assessment coordinators in the process. The office has an active webpage (<http://uprm.info/avaluo>) and has a peer reviewed assessment journal titled Avalúo Plus (<http://uprm.info/avaluoplus/>)

Objectives of the office have been successfully met. At this point, all thirteen departments of this college have designed and implemented an assessment plan. Each department has also completed two learning assessment cycles (Table I and II) (<http://uprm.info/avaluo/cierres/>). Each cycle consists of the following steps: choosing a criterion from the department's student learning outcomes; using a pre-intervention tool, assessing its actual status; implementing an intervention that teaches that skill or knowledge; and re-assessing the criteria to measure the intervention's effectiveness. The process is completed when actions are taken according to the results. All 13 departments have completed both cycles and are in the process of designing their third cycle (Table 3). With this recurrence of assessment cycles we claim the achievement of one of the main objectives of the office: the institutionalization of students' learning assessment in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Our methodology (See appendix I) has proven to be efficient since an evident empowerment has been observed in all department assessment coordinators. They are more confident and can now effectively design an assessment project without much mentoring. They have been active in disseminating their results through meetings and even in publications (Table I), which in turn have motivated other professors to be interested in the process of assessment as means of improving the teaching/learning process. Thus, the Office of Assessment and Continuous Improvement in the College of Arts and Sciences is assisting towards institutionalizing an assessment culture. In most of the departments, assessment projects are now being carried out by additional faculty members (that is those who are not assessment coordinators). These are faculty members

who, through the work of this Office and the processes herein described, have been exposed to assessment theories, methods and experiences. These experiences led them to develop a profound appreciation for assessment as an excellent mean to evaluate the learning, as well as to improve their teaching methodology.

Achievements:

Table I: All 13 departments of the *College of Arts and Sciences* have a learning assessment plan (<http://uprm.info/avaluo/planes/>) and have completed at least two learning assessment cycles (<http://uprm.info/avaluo/cierres/>).

Department	Learning Assessment Plan	Assessment Loop 1 Power point Presentation	Final report Loop 1	Published in A+ Journal	Assessment Loop 2 Power point Presentation	Final Report Loop 2
1. Biology	X	X	X		X	X
2. Marine sciences	X	X	X		X	X
3. Social Sciences	X	X	X		X	X
4. Economy	X	X	X	X	X	X
5. Nursing	X	X	X	X	X	X
6. Physical Education	X	X	X		X	X
7. Hispanic Studies	X	X	X	X	X	X
8. Physic	X	X	X		X	X
9. Geology	X	X	X	X	X	X
10. Humanities	X	X	X		X	X
11. English	X	X	X		X	X
12. Math	X	X	X	X	X	X
13. Chemistry	X	X	X		X	X

Table II: Criteria assessed and population impacted in each of the assessment cycles

Department	Learning Assessment Loop I – August 2006			Learning Assessment Loop II – January 2007		
	Impacted Population		Assessed Criteria	Impacted Population		Assessed Criteria
	Faculty	Students		Faculty	Students	
Biology	3	429	Assess learning in the Introductory Biology II course.	4	279	Assess learning in the Introductory Biology I course.
Marines Sciences	All	All	Assess qualifying exam results	6	23	Assess knowledge on marine sciences contemporary issues
English	6	250	Communication skills in writing	2	60	Communication skills in writing
Mathematics		12891	Math courses correlation	4	254	Math tutoring center effectiveness
Geology	3	44	Assessment on how the curriculum is matching with the Geology student profile	12	76	Assessment of the impact of research courses on the learning process of the Geology students
Hispanics Studies	5	111	Technology skills in Hispanic studies	2	57	Writing skills
Humanities		118	Critical thinking.	8	25	Critical thinking.
Nursing	a. 2 b. 2	a. 54 b. 23	a. Writing Communication b. Writing communication in clinical nursing documentation	1	33	Students level of knowledge concerning health promotion and maintenance concepts
Physical Education	1	21	Effective sports skills teaching	2	10	Effective sports skills teaching
Physics	4	35	Curriculum effectiveness in attaining student learning outcomes	7	169	Assess knowledge in thermodynamics
Social Sciences		12	Use of technological resources	9	502	Developing assessment skills in “new faculty”
Economics	10	776	Test whether our undergraduate students are in the process of achieving conceptual and quantitative command in economic theory and knowledge of the Puertorrican economy, after taking the Principles of economics courses (Micro & Macroeconomics) and Economy of Puerto Rico’s course.	2	40	Test whether our students are in the process of achieving conceptual & quantitative command in economic theory, after taking the Intermediate Microeconomic theory course.
Chemistry	2	71	Lab report writing skills	2	2,100	Evaluate the student’s failure rate in the first general chemistry course and its correlation with the math course level completed.

Table III

<i>Department</i>	<i>Proposal for Assessment Cycle 3 – August 2007</i>
1. Biology	Contemporary scientific technology & issues
2. Marine sciences	Scientific communication skills
3. Social Sciences	Computer sand technology skills
4. Economy	content
5. Nursing	Basic concepts knowledge
6. Physical Education	Oral communication skills
7. Hispanic Studies	Writing skills
8. Physic	Active learning effectiveness
9. Geology	Math learning
10. Humanities	Social bookmarking in teaching
11. English	Communication skills
12. Math	Teaching Math
13. Chemistry	Scientific communication skills

Table IV: Assessment workshops and meetings

Workshop date, title and attendance

<u>Workshop</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Participants</u>
Aprendizaje Activo como Estrategia Pedagógica en la Enseñanza de las Ciencias Políticas	September 14, 2006	16
De la Evaluación y del Progreso del Trabajo Argumentativo Estudiantil	September 21, 2006	15
Presentación de Cierres de Ciclo de Avalúo	January 14, 2007	25
Desarrollo de Mapas Cognitivos Mediante C-Maps	March 8, 2007	27

Monthly meetings with Assessment Coordinators

August 25, 2006

September 29, 2006

October 27, 2006

November 30, 2006

February 16, 2007

March 23, 2007

May 4, 2007

In progress:

Learning assessment plan

- All 13 department assessment plans were evaluated and feedback was returned to departments for proper action. They are in the process of revising the plan to include recommendations and to update it with the new implementation strategy.
- Revise assessment plan to take action on revision recommendations and to update
- Publish closing the loop projects
- Coordinate efforts to assure all 13 departments publish department's vision, mission and student profile in:
 - Department homepage
 - Curriculum catalog
 - Department Offices , classrooms
 - Course Syllabus
- Design and implement loop 3

Administrative assessment

All 13 departments completed an administrative assessment plan and received feedback on the plan. The A+ Office conducted a pilot administrative assessment project evaluating academic counseling in the school of Arts and Sciences last semester. A total of 432 students from 11 departments of the college of Arts and Sciences participated in the study. The results were analyzed by department and globally. Results from each department were returned for them to take action. It was found that 78% of the students had visited the academic counseling office of their dept. Most students used the office for curricular evaluation and tuition. Global results show that the students of Arts and Sciences were very satisfied with the services offered by the academic counseling office of their department since all services were rated above 3.9.(in a 1-5 scale).

APPENDIX

Appendix I

Arts and Sciences assessment Strategy and Methodology

- An assessment office was created: *Oficina de Avalúo y Mejoramiento Continuo*, A+ office (<http://www.uprm.info/avaluo>) to coordinate assessment plan implementation and help institutionalize an assessment culture in Arts and Sciences.
- Weekly meetings of A+ staff to coordinate assessment strategies
- Continuous mentoring of department coordinators to help them design and implement assessment strategies. Mentoring consisted of:
 - Monthly meetings of A+ staff and department coordinators to assess progress
 - Individual meetings of A+ staff with department coordinators to design assessment loops
 - Assessment workshops for further coordinator empowerment
 - Provide feedback on the 13 learning assessment plans
 - Revise department's "closing the loop" summaries and submitted articles
- Coordinated dissemination of assessment results
- Assisted in linking the Arts and Sciences assessment efforts with the Institutional Assessment Office (OMCA)
- Assisted in conducting an Arts and Sciences administrative assessment