

Center for Academic Support
Reading & Writing Center

Assessment Project
Spring 2013

The goal:

- To assess what students want or need from a session compared, or contrasted, to what consultants deem the student needs (SLO 1)
- To assess what students learn and understand to apply after the session. (SLO 2)

The Rationale:

Meeting weekly in fall of 2012, we devised a pilot assessment project conducted in the months of April and May, 2013. We had administered Student Satisfaction surveys in the past, but we wanted a deeper understanding of student learning, to know what students learned and understood what needed to be applied after the session. Since we had never assessed these skills previously, we decided to conduct a pilot rather than training the entire staff of 15 consultants to complete the assessment. Thus, three consultants participated in the pilot, the Lab Coordinator and two faculty leads.

The Plan:

We designed a form (Attachment A) for students to complete before seeing the consultant that asked for some indication of the help sought. When the session ended, students were to write out the next steps needed, having them doing so on same form as they had stated their original goal(s) for the session. Consultants completed the same form (Attachment B) as they always had about work completed during the session with suggestions for student's next step. We planned to compare/contrast these two forms with data with that indicated what the students thought they needed compared to what the consultant assessed to be necessary.

The Quantitative Results:

- How many students did we actually assess?
28 overall, with 25 correctly completing all forms.
- How many student and consultant expectations match for session goal? (see chart below, first column "Match Needs SLO 1")
- How many students could write out the next steps? (see chart below, second column "Next Steps Match SLO 2")

We rated student responses High, Medium, Low, or None. A high rating indicates that the student's goals match with the consultant's assessment, the medium indicate that most goals match, low only one goal matches, and zero means the goals did not match at all. A high next step rating means students clearly and correct wrote out next steps, medium means some next steps

written, a low means only one step briefly described, and zero, no attempt made to write out next step or completely inaccurate.

Matched Needs (SLO 1)		Next Steps Match (SLO 2)
High	24%	44%
Medium	36%	16%
Low	24%	16%
Zero	16%	20%

The Qualitative Results:

The plan was difficult to administer, so we made the right decision to conduct a pilot. As a normal procedure, consultants write the results of every consultation on a three part form: one copy goes to the student, one to the instructor, and one stays in the student's file. We continued to do this in addition to asking students to then complete their own form for next steps. Then we either had to make a photo copy of the form or have a student assistant do so. The consultants had little time to complete any more paperwork, especially if another student was waiting for an appointment. The student assistants are also similarly busy and had been trained one way to do their jobs, so adding a new detail proved mostly unsuccessful.

The assessment project was not entirely in vain as we learned from the responses as well as how we might improve and proceed next time. From the students' initial statement of goals for the session, we learned that they have grand expectations, unrealistic goals, often just checking all or most of the boxes provided for the session with 40% having no realistic assessment of their own needs. We were similarly disappointed that after a 25 minute session, still 20% of students could not or would not write out a brief few sentences about necessary next steps.

Next Steps:

We are intrigued by the results, albeit low and from a flawed process. We would like to improve the assessment by streamlining the paperwork for both consultants and students. Our past is that we often learn much from how other college writing centers operate. Our first lab coordinator and faculty lead attended conferences in late 1990s, networking with experts from all over the country. Rather than re-inventing the wheel, we plan to survey other college writing centers or attend national/state conferences to this end, too. Our goal is to conduct another, improved and informed pilot in Spring 2014.