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Is the Loop Really Closed?: The Assessment and Reassessment of Communications 101 Learning Outcomes

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Is the Loop Really Closed?
The Assessment and Reassessment of Communications 101 Learning Outcomes

Plan: Phase I

Establish Goal: Learning Outcomes
We chose 5 standards and outcomes that were closely modeled from ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education.

Identify Stakeholders / Assessment Team
5 members from the library and the Communication Studies Course Director along with multiple teaching faculty.

Choose Effective Assessment Method/Tools
* Class Observation  
* Quiz  
* Rubric

Analyze Results
Discussion & Grade Quizzes

Improve
Implement improvements where students show deficiencies

Close the Loop! Findings & Action:
Students did very well and received a good grade on the quiz. The only deficiency was citation practice.

Even though the students did well, we discovered:
* Grading inconsistencies with multiple graders  
* Rubric that was not adequately detailed  
* The quiz was poorly designed to retrieve valid data on our students’ learning outcomes. We could not determine if they acquired the targeted skills.

Improvement from Phase I:
Improvements included a newly designed quiz, established graders, and a detailed rubric.

Plan: Phase II

Establish Goal: Learning Outcomes
We narrowed it down to 4 standards and outcomes and also established student success rate at 70% for each skill.

Choose Effective Assessment Method/Tools
* Class Observation  
* Quiz  
* Rubric

Analyze Results, Improve & Close the Loop! Findings & Action:
Only 4 of 9 questions met our goal of 70% correctly answering the questions. Much more had to be done that Phase I!

Improvement from Phase II:

Outside Classroom:
The assessment team met with all instruction library liaisons to discuss: *The non-linear nature of research; *Teaching strategies; & *Classroom engagement and active learning activities. Instructors from the library graded the quiz in lieu of COM staff, these instructors attended a training session to ensure all understood the rubric for grading consistency.

Inside the Classroom:
* Revised quiz  
* Introduced class handouts  
* Library instruction outline that emphasized the deficiencies (for instructors)  
* Tools to help with citations  
* Incorporated active learning  
* Changed the timing of the instruction session to when an information need is present, which made the activity relevant!

Conclusion:
The students received good grades from Phase I library instruction, however did they really learn what we targeted? We could not really say for sure.

This case study reveals that an appropriate method and instruments are imperative for retrieving valid data. This case also displays the importance of collaboration and teamwork. Communication was always open between all members of the team as well as with the library instruction department. We were able to forge a great relationship with the Communication Studies Director—the libraries’ liaison and the Communication Studies Director authored a textbook chapter together about the library for all COM 101 classes. Last but not least, collaboration in an open communicative environment took the fear out of assessment; everyone understood we were assessing the PROCESS not the person, for the success of our students; the focus was learning outcomes and supporting our students for academic success and lifelong learning.

Poster by Carrie Gaxiola, Library Data Analyst
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