

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan\*  
Department of English  
Western Washington University

\*The English Department's plan is based on best practices for assessment and accreditation provided by the *Association of Departments of English* at its 2006 annual summer session for chairs.

**Course-Embedded Assessment Method**

**Step One:** Each quarter the Department votes on a major competency (or, in some quarters, on competencies that are specific to programs in the major) that it expects students to achieve while completing English coursework.

**Step Two:** Individually, faculty think about the graded assignments in their courses for the quarter and choose one (1) major graded assignment that measures some aspect or aspects of the competency. (Faculty choose an assignment they feel is important and already use often.)

**Step Three:** Individually, faculty develop student learning outcomes for the chosen assignment that help the instructor determine whether the competency have been achieved by the student. Faculty post their student learning outcomes, along with their assignments, to a Blackboard discussion forum on *English Faculty Resources*. Faculty read each others' posts, and the department's assessment coordinator defines the competency more specifically using common themes that emerge from the faculty's collective student learning outcomes.

**Step Four:** Individually, faculty develop a rubric or grading scale that articulates assessment in words. What degree of success toward achieving the student learning outcomes merits an A on this assignment? What makes up a B? Faculty define each level in relation to the progress made in achieving the student learning outcomes created in Step Three. If faculty use only exams, they should identify groups of specific questions on one of their major exams that address the competency and student learning outcomes. It will be most helpful if there are several questions.

**Step Five:** Faculty give the assignment/exam to their students this quarter in one class. Faculty grade it using the rubric. Faculty keep copies of the completed rubrics in their own files.

**Step Six:** Individually, faculty analyze the results of their assessment (i.e. completed rubrics) to identify:

1. How successful the students were in achieving the student learning outcomes. This is NOT about reporting grades: instead, faculty record what learning objectives students did and did not achieve and/or to what degree.
2. How faculty would change or improve the teaching of this assignment. Were faculty satisfied? What do faculty need to do as instructors to improve their teaching and/or the students' achievement of the student learning outcomes? Improvements can range from specific tweaking of the assignment or the activities leading up to it to the need for more staff development training or new equipment, or more resources from the department/college, etc.
3. Faculty post findings (1&2) on Blackboard.

4. The department holds a department meeting attended by tenure-line and lecturer faculty. Faculty share and discuss their assessment findings at the department meeting.

**Step Seven:** The Department's assessment coordinator fills out a reporting form, based on information posted on Blackboard and on the discussions held at the department meeting. The report summarizes the process and the overall results of the faculty analysis. The report will also include a list of the top three to six changes that faculty felt would most improve student learning, along with a timeline and plan for their implementation. Finally, the report ties the competency and results to appropriate language in the Department's mission statement and to the University's and College's strategic plans.