

Meta-assessment Analysis Report for the College of
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Please return the completed report back to the Office of Academic

Planning and Assessment by **February 27, 2015**.

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Assessment is an important best-practice in higher education, helping academic programs to determine whether key objectives are being met, to identify areas for improvement, and to develop actions for improving program outcomes. Meaningful and effective assessment is crucial to many discipline-specific accreditations as well as our University's regional accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. Meta-assessment also helps ensure that all programs at Sam Houston State University engage in a meaningful and successful continuous improvement process.

Meta-assessment serves two important roles for each college and the University. It provides valuable feedback to units regarding ways in which they may continue to improve their annual assessment processes. It also allows college and University leaders to observe the overall quality of assessment processes for their units. This report will detail the following: the meta-assessment process utilized by the College of **HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**; the college plan for distributing the completed meta-assessment rubrics to the departments and programs; the assessment strengths observed within the reviewed assessment plans; the areas for improvement of assessment practices; the strategies for implementing those improvements; and, the training or resources needed to implement those strategies.

Section 1: Description of Meta-assessment Methodology Employed by the College

Detail the College's meta-assessment method and process. Include a description of who was involved (e.g., a committee of senior faculty or college administrators), your methodology for evaluating unit-level assessment plans, steps for ensuring reliability, and your timeline.

The college began meta-assessment activities for this cycle in the summer 2014. First steps included direct contact between the Associate Dean charged with assessment duties and the chairs/assessment committees of each unit. Initial conversations focused on the need to create uniform expectations of assessment standards and practices among participating faculty. These relevant faculty received guidance with the current university assessment software, OATDb. Further, with the Associate Dean each such faculty member/chair conducted a one-on-one read-through of existing assessment reporting.

Next steps in the fall 2014 semester included another series of meetings with chairs/reporting faculty to introduce them to the current meta-assessment rubric. Each such faculty member received direct instruction on the current SHSU assessment nomenclature, expected standards of reporting for each report level, and for the generation of Plans for Continuous Improvement (PCIs).

Later in the fall 2014 semester, the Associate Dean charged with assessment duties polled chairs for candidates to form a college-wide assessment committee. Called the CHSS Assessment Committee, this group consisted of 10 faculty members (including some members who chaired their department/program) from the 7 different units comprising the college. Care was taken to

ensure a balance of veteran with newer faculty. One expected outcome of the committee is to create “ambassadors of assessment” to bring the logic and narrative of college assessment efforts back into the units in peer-to-peer communication. Early results as demonstrated by the nature of questions received, suggestions offered, requests for further reading, etc., indicate that this community conversation is progressing.

At the end of the fall 2014 semester, the CHSS Assessment Committee met for introduction to the meta-assessment rubric employed by the SHSU Office of Academic Planning and Assessment. Committee members met in joint conversation to learn about the terms of the rubric, its functionality, and basic standards for applying the competencies of the rubric to existing program reports. At this time, committee members self-assigned as readers of various college units assessment reports. No member was allowed to assessment a report from her own program or a program within her greater unit. The college supports 28 separate assessment reports across its departments, programs, and degree programs. The aim of the committee was to get 3 readers for each of the reports, meaning that committee members agreed to read roughly 7 to 8 reports per person. In practice, some reports did not receive more than 2 readings. No report was permitted to have just 1 reader.

Committee members returned completed meta-assessment rubric documents early in January (9-16) of 2015. Total results were recorded in spreadsheet form and distributed back to committee members for overall review. Plans had been in place for a meeting to reconcile widely disparate results should any occur. In this instance, readers were within a degree of excellence overall for all programs. There were few separations of more than one degree of excellence for any specific items with the programs. This result indicated the expertise and effective education of committee members. No reconciliation process was deemed necessary.

Section 2: Plan for Distributing Completed Rubrics to Units

Detail the College’s plan for sharing the completed meta-assessment rubrics with its departments and programs.

Beginning on 20 January, 2015, reporting results with written comments were returned to the various department chairs and program heads of the college. These individuals read the reports and returned written responses by 30 January 2015. In some instances, the individual chairs/directors answered alone. In others, the units formed committees of their own to review and respond to the reports. In all instances, such committees included the chair and the associate chair/director of graduate studies. Interested faculty also joined such committees.

During the period 20 January-30 January, the Associate Dean charged with college assessment duties carried out individual correspondence/conversations principally with the chairs/directors of the various units. These conversations centered on interpreting any unclear results, assisting with questions about writing the responses, helping the chairs/directors plan for linking the assessment/meta-assessment process to ongoing development of strategic planning. To consolidate this process, the dean of the College of **Humanities and Social Sciences** also appointed the Associate Dean handling assessment to liaise with chairs in submitting budget proposals for the coming fiscal cycle. The idea is to link firmly the allied processes of program

assessment, outcomes, strategic planning, and budgeting thus creating a holist culture of planning within the college.

On or before 6 February, the chairs/directors were copied drafts of this present report in order to provide feedback, learn of the overall college strategy, and to link their local planning/assessment procedures more thoroughly together.

The final submitted draft of this present report included relevant edits based upon chair/director response to the first draft. According to the deadlines of the SHSU Office of Academic Planning and Assessments, this final version was submitted on or before 27 February 2015.

Section 3: Observed Strengths within College Assessment Plans

Detail the general strengths identified by the College after reviewing its units' assessment plans. What general aspects of the annual assessment processes are units mastering? Are there any units that you would recommend serve as exemplary models?

Uniformly, reviews of CHSS unit assessment demonstrated that chairs and directors performed well setting goals and outcomes. Additionally, several of the units (notably PSYC and PHIL) applied relatively advanced statistical analyses of data. Strengths also included creating appropriate objectives for their goals.

Section 4: Observed Weaknesses within College Assessment Plans

Detail the general weaknesses identified by the College after reviewing its units' assessment plans. What general aspects of the annual assessment process are units struggling with?

Two thematic weaknesses appeared throughout the college (outside of PSYC):

- 1) Unit directors had trouble linking indicators to goals and objectives;
- 2) All Units, PSYC included, had trouble creating effective Plans for Continuous Improvement (PCI). The key observed issue was that of lifting perceptions away from assessment for assessment's sake and toward utilization of assessment for strategic planning and programming decisions. There remains a disconnect between the idea of gathering assessment data and the idea of using that data to make concrete decisions about program organization, resource utilization, and/or pedagogy

Section 5: Strategies Needed to Address Identified Weaknesses

Detail the College's strategies for addressing the general weaknesses identified after reviewing its units' assessment plans.

Having completed the assessment review process, CHSS chairs and program directors have received back the accumulated observations of their peers. During the remainder of the spring 2015 semester, the Associate Dean assigned assessment duties will contact each chair/director for one-on-one review of the information. Additionally, the group will meet as a whole to discuss strategies for developing effective PCI.

Section 6: Training/Resources Needed to Implement the College's Improvement Strategy

Detail the types of training and resources that would assist the College with implementing its improvement strategies.

To increase reliability and utility of assessment planning among the units, and to address the known weaknesses in existing Plans for Continuous Improvement (PCIs), the CHSS Assessment Committee will pursue internal training of appropriate program personnel charged with assessment duties. This training will base itself upon a series of assessment texts and manuals.

Banta, Trudy W., et. al. *Designing Effective Assessment*, (San Francisco: 2009).

Middaugh, Michael F. *Planning and Assessment in Higher Education*, (San Francisco: 2010).

Suskie, Linda. *Assessing Student Learning*, (San Francisco, 2009).

Walvoord, Barbara E. *Assessment Clear and Simple*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: 2010).