

**LEARNING  
ASSESSMENT  
COUNCIL**

**FINAL  
GUIDEBOOK  
& BY-LAWS**

**Revised February 2017**

[www.pcc.edu/assessment](http://www.pcc.edu/assessment)

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## **INTRODUCTION**

PCC's Learning Assessment Council, established in 2008, is comprised of a variety of faculty district wide with administrative support from the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, and the Director of Curriculum. It reports to the Vice President of Academic Affairs and maintains informational ties with the Educational Advisory Committee (EAC).

## **PURPOSE**

Learning assessment is a crucial piece of what PCC submits to its accrediting agency, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). In order to remain in compliance with accreditation standards, we must:

- Be engaged in learning assessment in some creative way
- Be able to show that we are using what we learn to make adjustments and improvements

Beyond these important requirements, however, is the institutional desire to demonstrate that our students are in fact learning what we say they are learning, and to make improvements where we find that improvements need to be made. These two motives can be synergistic rather than mutually exclusive.

## **HISTORY**

Between 1995 and 2005, PCC worked on developing outcomes for all of its courses and programs with the guidance of Dr. Ruth Stiehl and the help of the many PCC faculty who participated.

In 2005 PCC received a recommendation from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) asking that PCC better assess student learning at the institutional level. As a result, the Learning Assessment Council (LAC) was formed with a charge to focus on the six Core Outcomes applicable to all graduates of PCC.

Sylvia Gray was appointed the first LAC chair in 2008. During her term, through many conversations, questionnaires, meetings, a First Annual "Assessment Circus," and more, the Council came up with many recommendations as to how to proceed. The essential plan was to use the already-existing structure of the Subject Area Committees (SACs) and ask each SAC to assess learning of a designated core outcome each year. The results would be posted on the Learning Assessment web page and, at the end of the year, a collection of willing participants would participate in a peer review to look at the results in the aggregate and come up with

recommendations for improvement. This review process was initially called the College Core Outcome Review (CCOR), but evolved to “Summer Peer Review” or, simply, “Peer Review.”

Shirlee Geiger was appointed LAC chair in 2010 just after NWCCU sent a letter that included the following: PCC must “hasten its progress in demonstrating, through regular and systematic assessment, that students who complete their programs have achieved the intended learning outcomes of degrees and certificates.”

The process initiated by Sylvia continued, but SACs ramped up their assessment timetable. Other changes: The CTE SACs were asked to assess their degree and certificate outcomes in the assessment process. Since they had mapped these program outcomes to the core outcomes, assessing these degree and certificate outcomes meant that the core outcomes would be assessed indirectly.

The core outcomes also became the basis for PCC’s transfer degrees and the Associate of General Studies Degree outcomes.

Since 2010, there have been three additional chairs of the LAC: Michele Marden (FT faculty, mathematics, Sylvania), who served from 2012 - 2014; Wayne Hooke (FT faculty, psychology, Sylvania), who served from 2014 - 2016; and, Chris Brooks (FT faculty, history, Sylvania), whose term runs 2016 - 2018. Three major changes took place during Michele’s and Wayne’s respective tenure as chairs:

1. SACs were asked to use standardized report forms (authored by Wayne with the consultation of Michele, Chris, and others) for their annual assessment reports. This was judged to be necessary because of the enormous variability of quality and content in assessment reports up to that point, with the concomitant difficulty in evaluating the reports during peer review.
2. The college dropped the “out there” orientation and interpretation of the core outcomes. In other words, outcome attainment by students must be judged while students are enrolled at the college, not in terms of how their studies at PCC will impact their lives at unspecified points in the future. This was judged to be necessary because of the practical impossibility of assessing outcomes attainment once a given student was no longer at PCC.
3. The requirement for SACs to assess two outcomes each year was changed to only one outcome. This was brought about by feedback received during the college’s 2014 accreditation visit, at which the visiting accreditors suggested both that the pace of assessment might be overly ambitious, not least if the college decides to consider new core outcomes and/or new approaches to assessment.

As of 2017, the committee has a number of ongoing goals, including the following: to help lead the college to more systematically and meaningfully capture summative assessment data for the core

outcomes from general education courses at the college, to ensure that the existing assessment process is both transparent and meaningful for both LDC and CTE SACs, and to step up outreach efforts in the name of making the committee's work more visible to the college's faculty.

### **What will Success Look Like?**

The LAC seeks to inform and transform the "culture" of assessment at PCC. Faculty members understand PCC's core outcomes and design their classes with an understanding and awareness of the role any particular class plays in fulfilling this institutional promise to students and other stakeholders.

Most or all PCC faculty understand the different purposes and audiences for assessment and will have a special interest in using assessment results for continual improvement at the classroom, discipline and program levels.

Faculty members seek to learn about and share with one another the latest techniques and research regarding assessment, through a wide variety of formal and informal venues.

Assessment results are collected and reported in such a way that decision-making at PCC will be evidence-based and integrated at all the different levels. This includes resource allocation at the level of college and division administration, as well as program, discipline and classroom levels through our SACs, and by individual instructors planning and implementing class improvements.

PCC is able to provide ample evidence to our accrediting agency that PCC is achieving the educational outcomes we set for ourselves.

### **Responsibilities of Council Members**

Members are expected to attend all LAC meetings for the year and participate in at least one subcommittee. The LAC has a standing funding committee, with task force subcommittees established each year under the direction of the chair and vice chair.

## **LEARNING ASSESSMENT COUNCIL BY-LAWS**

The LAC by-laws were revised and approved in February 2017.

### **I. Name**

Learning Assessment Council (LAC)

### **II. Object of the Organization**

#### **A. Mission and Values**

The mission of the Learning Assessment Council is to guide and support a faculty-led assessment process both to continually improve teaching and learning and to help PCC meet accreditation standards.

Our college core outcomes charge us with creating opportunities for our students to become expressive, self-reflective, and culturally-sensitive citizens of a global community; capable of imaginative and critical thought and of making a living that can benefit the community and the environment. In seeking to assess our core outcomes, the Learning Assessment Council values and recognizes that:

- For accreditation and improvement, we must assess learning at many levels
- Assessment findings inform college planning and budget processes for improvement
- Learning is complex, multi-dimensional, and ongoing
- In some cases the assessments will be proxies for outcomes that may be difficult or impossible to measure
- Methods chosen should be meaningful, useful, and respectful to faculty and students

#### **B. Goals and Objectives**

In pursuit of these ends we will:

- Monitor the national and international conversation around assessment and accountability in higher education and assist PCC faculty members in their awareness and understanding of, and participation in, this conversation
- Maintain assessment as faculty work by:
  - offering training, facilitation services, and assessment coaching.

- collaborating to maintain a peer review of the SAC assessment process.
- engaging with the college administration and governance bodies to offer faculty perspectives on assessment and accountability issues, especially as these relate to accreditation.
- leading the college into a culture of continuous improvement with emphasis on valuing evidence-based educational practice.

### **III. Members and Support**

- A. Membership shall include voting (faculty and non-faculty) and non-voting (managers who provide administrative support and liaisons) individuals.

Faculty: Individuals who teach at least two credit courses in the school year. Members who have additional duties (e.g. librarians, TLC coordinators) will be considered faculty unless they are managers.

Managers: Individuals who provide administrative support as required by the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

Liaisons: Individuals who are members of other PCC groups who have overlapping interests.

- B. Membership shall be broad and representative in composition, and membership shall include voting and non-voting members.

1. Voting Members

- a. 15-25 members.
- b. Voting members are at least 66.6% faculty
- c. No fewer than four adjunct faculty
- d. Strive for balance between Career Technical Education (CTE) and Lower Division Collegiate-Developmental Education (LDC-DE) faculty
- e. Strive for balance of faculty/staff among campuses

2. Non-Voting Members

- a. Managers
- b. Dean of Academic Affairs
- c. Director of Institutional Effectiveness
- d. Director of Curriculum
- e. Liaisons (e.g. SPARC, Diversity, EAC, Student Support Services, TLC, Staff Development, Academic Support Coordinator)

### C. Terms of Voting Membership

1. Terms shall begin in Fall Quarter.
2. If a member resigns, leaving less than six months to be served, the position may be left vacant for the remainder of the year.
3. Membership in at least one standing subcommittee or task force committee for each quarter of the academic year.
4. Committee members should inform the chair of the LAC prior to absences; no proxies shall be allowed. For members serving a term, multiple absences to LAC or subcommittee meetings could result in replacement on the LAC.
5. If a voting member is consistently unable to attend meetings and/or participate on a subcommittee, the chair may move them to inactive status. Inactive members may not participate in voting, but can be reinstated by the chair at any point once able to attend and participate.

## IV. LAC Meetings and Voting

### A. LAC Meetings

1. Regular LAC meetings shall be held a minimum of one and a maximum of three times per quarter.
2. Meetings shall be open to PCC faculty, staff, and students. Attendees wishing to address the LAC must contact the LAC chair in advance of the meeting. Attendees shall sign in at the beginning of the meeting.
3. Meeting attendees shall adhere to the LAC Behavior Agreement. Created in 2011, this normative agreement outlines effective team behaviors.
4. Agenda and meeting minutes will be posted to the LAC web page.

## B. Voting

1. Fifty percent of the active voting members + 1 constitute a quorum.
2. The LAC may continue business in the absence of a quorum unless a member calls for a quorum.
3. Ideal decision making process is consensus building. In absence of consensus, at the discretion of the LAC chair, decisions will be made by simple majority vote of the quorum. LAC chair only votes to break a tie.

## V. Standing and Task Force Subcommittees

### A. Standing Subcommittee:

#### 1. Funding Subcommittee

a. Members: LAC chair, LAC vice chair, Dean of Academic Affairs, other members of LAC as appointed by LAC chair

#### b. Duties:

- Establish funding priorities for the year
- Ensure that essential tasks of the committee (e.g. summer peer review, assessment coaching) are adequately funded
- Ensure that participation on the LAC by part-time faculty members is adequately compensated
- Fund other initiatives (e.g. conference attendance) as budget allows

### B. Task Force Subcommittees:

1. The LAC chair will establish the tasks of the committee each year.

2. For each task being considered by the LAC, a task force will be formed by the LAC chair by appointing a Task Force Leader (or Leaders).

3. Members of the committee will be asked to volunteer to serve on a task force that corresponds to their interest and abilities.

#### 4. Responsibilities of Leaders of Task Force Subcommittees:

- Coordinate timely progress on the task
- Report progress at the LAC meetings
- Check in monthly with the LAC chair

## **VI. LAC Chair**

- A. Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPASA) hires LAC chair. Appointment is for one year and ideal term of service is two years. LAC chair must be a PCC faculty member (full time or adjunct).
- B. Year following term, LAC chair moves into vice-chair position to support new chair unless next vice-chair has been hired and is willing to take on duties.

### **C. Duties:**

1. Chairs regular LAC meetings with recommendations provided to Dean of Academic Affairs.
2. Facilitates the collection of assessment related data (e.g., SAC-created assessment reports, peer review).
3. Monitors the work of the LAC Leaders and Task Force Leaders.
4. Organizes assessment sessions for college in-service events and other main events (such as the New Faculty Institute) throughout the year in consultation with LAC vice-chair.
5. Responsible for the content and accuracy of the LAC website.
6. Interfaces with Dean of Academic Affairs.
7. Interfaces with SAC chairs.
8. Acts as a liaison to Educational Advisory Council (EAC), Degrees and Certificates (DAC), Curriculum Committee (CC), and other related committees as necessary.
10. Assists the District with outside accrediting responsibilities, primarily the Northwest Commission for Colleges and Universities (NWCCU).
11. Gives feedback to SAC chairs on peer review of SAC Assessment Reports.

## **VII. LAC Vice-Chair**

- A. Vice President of Academic Affairs hires the LAC vice-chair. Appointment is for one year prior to serving as LAC chair and year following term as chair. LAC vice-chair must be a PCC faculty member (full time or adjunct).
- B. Ideally, LAC vice-chair has served the college as a LAC coach.
- C. Duties:
  - 1. Assumes responsibilities for assessment coaching for SAC assessment projects: appoints the SAC coaches; holds regular meetings; provides support and suitable training
  - 2. Organizes assessment sessions for college in-service events and other main events (such as the New Faculty Institute) throughout year in consultation with LAC chair
  - 3. Vice-chair assumes all duties of the chair if the chair is unavailable

## **VIII. Vice President of Academic Affairs**

- A. Compensation for the Learning Assessment chair and vice-chair is determined in collaboration with the Vice President of Academic Affairs and may consist of course releases, time releases, or stipends.
- B. Duties of the Vice President of Academic Affairs:
  - 1. Publicly provide love and support, especially for the coaches, and fight tooth and nail for money to be sent our way.

## **IX. Bylaws and Mission**

- A. Bylaws are reviewed at least biannually by LAC Leaders. If there is a need to alter bylaws, input is gathered from the LAC members and then submitted for approval by Vice President of Academic Affairs.
- B. Mission is reviewed at least every three years by the LAC Leaders. If there is a need to alter mission, input is gathered from the LAC members and then submitted for approval by Vice President of Academic Affairs.

# APPENDIX

## **Normative/Behavior Agreement**

### **Introduction**

Normative Agreements are a set of rules or guidelines LAC members identify to shape how positive and productive interaction will occur to reach LAC outcomes.

As stated in the LAC Bylaws: “Members will conduct themselves in the manner defined by the normative/behavioral agreement.”

Members define what behaviors are appropriate and what are not along with how the facilitator/leader/chair/ member will deal with them.

### **Effective Behaviors in Working Together**

1. Be respectful to other members’ thoughts and ideas. Maintain attentiveness and actively listen.
  - Avoid negative nonverbal and verbal behavior.
  - Minimize texting, laptop use, and side conversations.
  - Do not dominate discussions.
  - Do not interrupt.
2. Stay on the topics associated with the agenda.
3. Use constructive feedback.
4. Give attention to members who may not be engaged. Encourage their involvement.
5. Share your ideas, questions, and concerns. Keep them relevant and don’t hold back.
6. Be willing to compromise and follow the LAC decision-making process in the bylaws.
7. Ask for clarification and be patient if there is confusion over a topic.
8. Acknowledge and consider part-time faculty perspectives and “plight” when making decisions about commitment and policy.
9. Check your individual “hidden agenda” at the door. Disclose which position is informing your point of view (representing other college groups or individuals, such as Diversity Council, SPARC, Union, part-time, full-time, CTE, DE, LDC, etc.).
10. Arrive on time and be prepared for the meeting.

## Definitions and Acronyms

### Assessment of Student Learning

“[T]he systematic collection of information about student learning, using the time, knowledge, expertise, and resources available, in order to inform decisions about how to improve learning.” (Walvoord 2).

### CC = Curriculum Committee

“The Curriculum Committee is a standing committee of the Educational Advisory Council (EAC). The overall academic integrity of the college's courses is the committee's first responsibility. The committee reviews--and makes recommendations regarding--new courses, revisions to existing courses, general education issues, cultural diversity designation, and embedded related instruction.” (<http://www.pcc.edu/resources/academic/eac/curriculum/curriculum-committee/>)

### CCOG = Course Content and Outcomes Guide

A SAC-authored document that describes standards, content, outcomes, and materials for a specific course.

### Classroom Assessment

Assessment the instructor conducts in a particular section. Classroom assessment may involve the grading of assignments, projects, and exams, etc., or general assessment to identify areas where future content or delivery could be improved.

### Core Outcomes

The institutional outcomes that students shall ideally meet upon completion of a degree at PCC. Currently, there are six: Communication, Community and Environmental Responsibility, Critical Thinking, Cultural Awareness, Professional Competence, and Self-Reflection.

### Course Assessment

Campus-based or districtwide assessment of students enrolled in a particular course (e.g., all students enrolled in WR 122 during a particular term).

### CTE = Career-Technical Education

CTE courses and programs emphasize the development of hard skills and trades. CTE certificates and AAS degrees are designed for students seeking employment when they finish at PCC. Generally, CTE courses are not designed with transferability in mind, but some four-year colleges do accept individual CTE courses, blocks of CTE courses, and even entire AAS degrees toward their bachelor's degrees.

### DAC = Degrees and Certificates Committee

A subcommittee of the EAC. “The committee makes recommendations on issues relating to general education, basic competencies and course distribution as they impact degree, certificate, and course requirements. The committee oversees the college's residency and degree completion requirements and makes recommendations on requests for exceptions to approved policies where

feasible.” (<http://www.pcc.edu/resources/academic/eac/curriculum/degree-certificate-committee/index.html>)

### **DE = Developmental Education**

Sub-100-level courses in reading and writing.

### **Degrees at PCC**

- AAS = Associate of Applied Science: A two-year Career-Technical degree offered at PCC.
- AGS = Associate of General Studies: A two-year general degree at PCC that accommodates both CTE and LDC credits as electives. It is not considered a transferable degree.
- AS = Associate of Science: A two-year transferable degree at PCC that is lightly structured and allows students more freedom in course selection than the AAOT or ASOT/B.
- AAOT = Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer: A highly-structured two-year degree offered at all community colleges in Oregon. Upon acceptance to any of Oregon’s public universities, an AAOT holder is guaranteed junior-level admission and is guaranteed to have met all freshman/sophomore general education requirements at that institution.
- ASOT/B = Associate of Science Oregon Transfer in Business. A highly-structured two-year degree designed for pre-business majors at community colleges in Oregon. Like the AAOT, it offers certain provisions and guarantees at Oregon’s public universities. Unlike the AAOT, it requires each student to know their destination school up front in order to complete a unique set of requirements specified by that institution’s School of Business Administration.

### **Department/Discipline Assessment**

When LDC and DE SACs conduct a districtwide assessment on a target population (e.g., students enrolled in a particular course, in a group of courses, or in sequential courses, etc.) to determine and/or measure the “strengths and weaknesses of the students’ work in relation to departmental learning goals” (Walvoord 3). This information is used by the department or the SAC to make decisions about curriculum and pedagogy.

### **Direct Assessment**

Evaluating student work *directly*, as opposed to using the results from a student’s self-evaluation to measure achievement.

### **EAC = Educational Advisory Council**

A districtwide committee that “crafts and revises policies and standards pertaining to academic, curricular, student development, and student governance issues and makes recommendations to the district president. The EAC provides an opportunity for discussion and exchange of views regarding educational issues at PCC--whether initiated by students, faculty, staff, or administration...” (<http://www.pcc.edu/resources/academic/eac/>)

### **Formative Assessment**

Evaluations done during the process of learning (in a term or over the course of a program) with the goal of informing the student or teacher as to what has been learned well or not yet mastered. The results of formative assessment can often guide decisions for program management and improvement.

**Gen Ed = General Education**

At PCC, Gen Ed is a degree component comprised of select courses in Arts & Letters; Social Science; and Mathematics (LDC only), Science, and Computer Studies. The term “general” denotes its inherent value to students in all programs and disciplines.

**IE = Institutional Effectiveness**

Formerly called Institutional Research, IE “supports Portland Community College’s mission and core themes, and provides information for use in planning, assessment, accreditation, state and federal reporting.” (<http://www.pcc.edu/ir/>)

**Indirect Assessment**

Using only the results of a student’s self-evaluation, a poll, or hearsay, etc., to measure student achievement. [Example: “...Asking students or alumni how well they thought they learned...and so on.” (Walvoord 3)]

**LAC = Learning Assessment Council**

A faculty-driven committee charged with leading the annual discipline and program assessment effort at PCC.

**LDC = Lower Division Collegiate**

Freshman- and sophomore-level college courses that are inherently transferable.

**Levels of Outcomes**

- Classroom: outcomes for students taking a specific class (i.e., students in a particular CRN)
- Course: outcomes for students taking a specific course (e.g., all students in BI 112)
- Core: outcomes for all graduates of the institution
- Department/discipline: outcomes for students majoring in a particular transfer discipline
- Institutional: at PCC, this is the same as “Core”
- Program: outcomes for students completing certificates or degrees in specific career-technical areas

**NWCCU = Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities**

One of eight U. S. regional accrediting agencies for higher education. NWCCU is the agency that accredits PCC.

**Outcomes**

Actions, skills, knowledge, habits of mind that a student demonstrates at the end of a learning experience, having practiced and acquired them during that learning experience. Outcomes are designed before the learning activity\*, and then measured after completion of the activity.

\*Activity is used broadly here, as outcome design applies to assignments and projects, to whole courses, to terms and semesters, to programs, and/or to degrees.

**Outcomes Assessment**

The act of measuring students’ achievement of academic outcomes (or ‘goals’). “A department [or program or college] can state its highest goals, including goals such as students’ ethical development, understanding of diversity, and the like. Then it can seek the best available indicators about whether those goals are being met.” (Walvoord 2)

**Peer Review**

The practice of having faculty read and provide feedback on their peers' annual assessment reports using an established rubric. PCC conducts a formal Peer Review each summer.

**Program Assessment**

When CTE SACs conduct a districtwide assessment on a target population (e.g., students in a capstone course, in a group of courses, or in sequential courses, etc.) to determine and/or measure the "strengths and weaknesses of the students' work in relation to departmental learning goals" (Walvoord 3). This information is used by the department or the SAC to make decisions about curriculum and pedagogy.

**Program Review**

A formal process by which departments and programs reflect and self-assess, via a written and oral report to the PCC administration, once every five years.

**SAC = Subject Area Committee**

An inter-campus committees comprised of all part-time and full-time faculty who teach in a particular program (CTE) or discipline (DE and LDC).

**Summative Assessment**

Assessing the level of learning or mastery of a student, primarily for an audience other than the teacher or learner.

**TSA = Technical Skill Attainment**

An annual summative assessment required by the State of Oregon for all Perkins-funded CTE programs.

**Work Cited**

- Walvoord, Barbara E. *Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.