



ASSESSMENT MATTERS:

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Assessment? Are we done yet? Memoirs from 2014 to present

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As a Graduate Interdisciplinary Program, the Second Language Acquisition and Teaching (SLAT) Program is not a department, nor are we associated with any one department. As such, we have only volunteer faculty, including our Director. *What, who, and how would Student Learning Outcomes Assessment occur in such a situation?* The answer is a dedicated staff member who can oversee the assessment process from beginning to end, seeking input at each step from the Director, the Executive Council, and other staff members. The staff member, in our case, was a Program Coordinator (PC) who worked very closely with Ryan Foor in the Office of Instruction and Assessment to first, develop robust learning outcomes, and then help to design appropriate rubrics. The PC ultimately and finally had to work with the Executive Council and faculty to implement the assessment and gather the data.

Our current Student Learning Outcomes Assessment is the result of over 2 and ½ years of planning and implementation. We started this project in 2014 when Robin Staples began as Program Coordinator in SLAT. Assessment had been on our radar for about a year prior at that point, as our Academic Program Review (APR) was looming in the headlights. OIA and Dr. Foor offered workshops that the SLAT administrative staff and Director attended; these workshops were designed to help us through the process. The exemplary websites on the OIA's Assessment website served as basic templates, and so the process began. We learned about direct and indirect measures of student learning outcomes; it took some real hard thinking about what a learning outcome was, what an assessment tool was, whether it was measuring what it was supposed to, and how to go about implementing it. At every step, Robin said, "Whew! I'm glad that is finished!" Only then we realized that we were not finished. *Assessment never ends!* It is not something that you do and then are finished with until your next APR. Robin had to rethink her approach to Assessment and incorporate it into every aspect of our program. Student Learning Outcome Assessment could not be treated separately from our daily running of the program. The faculty and the Executive Council also had to accept that it is just a routine part of the program.

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Robin launched the data collection in the 2015-16 academic year, with lengthy emails to the faculty who were completing the qualifying review of first-year students, and serving on committees (comps, proposals, and defenses) to explain the process and to ask them to complete the questionnaires. She also sent emails and exit surveys to graduating students. Mid-way through the academic year, we switched from collecting data via fillable PDFs to online Qualtrics surveys. Using an online data collection system greatly increased faculty response, and our ability to collect and collate data. Once we had processed the data from the 2015-2106 Academic Year, it was presented to the Executive Council who discussed it and made comments, which were incorporated into our APR self-study.

In summary, for a program with no faculty lines and over 90 students in the Ph.D. program when the process started, assigning a dedicated staff member was and remains essential to implementation of the Learning Outcomes Assessment. Keep in mind that it is never finished, but rather must be a part of the daily and weekly routine of the program.

For more information on student learning outcomes assessment, contact:



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