
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME ASSESSMENT REPORT 2014-2015

Field Group: Environmental Justice Theory

Major: Environmental Justice Theory

List the names of those involved in the completion of this report:

John Doe, Evelyn Dear, Mat Assess, Cynthia Eval, Tommy Gun

1. Reflection on any changes from last year's assessment.

Last year we assessed SLO#1 (Students will be able to identify the five biomes and describe the differing environmental challenges facing each of them), which was the first time we ever conducted an assessment of any kind. In terms of the assessment procedures, it was challenging to decide on what to assess as a group, who would be responsible for what portions of the assessment, and our timeline. This was more of a logistics problem which we ironed out and were able to come up with a plan that was actionable.

The assessment itself was much easier. We already had a rubric/criteria that we were already using to grade final student papers in our **EJT 454 The Environment and Global Warming** course. We had a sample of approximately 15 student papers that were distributed amongst the different faculty in the department (3 papers per faculty). The faculty member who taught the course used the rubric during the final grading of the papers and it only took a few additional minutes per student paper. However, all other faculty involved read the papers as a separate document purely for assessment, which took approximately 15 to 30 minutes per student paper. Because some faculty members had more work to do than others as they did not teach the course, and it was decided that in the future, if the student work being used in the assessment came from one specific course, only that faculty member would conduct the scoring using the rubric. However, other faculty would support in the writing of the report and no individual faculty will be required to assess another SLO before other faculty read and scored an SLO individually. This is only in the case where the assessment is from a course, otherwise, it would be considered a shared assessment.

The findings themselves were useful. We realized that our students were mostly “highly developed” in their knowledge of the different biomes and environmental challenges that exist in the world. However, most students were only “emerging” at their level of being able to link the biomes with more specific environmental challenges. What we decided to do was to provide more specific emphasis in the future course on the intersection of the two. Our next assessment after the program review will inform us of how this change impacted learning. We also realized that we wanted students to know more about the causes and not just be able to identify, and as such, we plan on revising SLO#1 when we complete our next program review, which will occur in 2018. This will give us ample time to reflect on how we will revise the SLO as part of the program review and conduct this revision as part of a review of the whole program.

2. Please list student learning outcomes for the major and which SLO(s) you will assess this year.

This year, we will be assessing SLO#3 (Students will be able to identify relevant literature on a topic of their own choosing, critique the literature, and present the literature in a written format that is most appropriate for research in Environment Science). We will be assessing this SLO through their senior thesis papers and/or capstone course final papers using the attached Information Literacy rubric modified slightly to reflect our departments focus. Ultimately, we randomly selected 10 papers from the thesis capstone course and all 10 of this year's theses, which equates to 20 total papers being scored for this assessment. We have attached two capstones and two theses as examples.

We will not be assessing SLO#2, #4 through #7 this year for the simple reason that we are choosing to assess what we can meaningfully assess within the time frame of an academic year, which is one SLO. We plan on continuing the process of assessing one SLO each year until we have assessed each one. All SLOs can be found on our program website at <http://www.cooluniversity.edu/environmentaltheory>. They are also attached as appendix to this report.

All department faculty members were involved in this assessment from reading, scoring, analysis, and completion of the report.

3. Description of analysis of student learning outcome assessment.

SLO#3 was assessed using the attached rubric. First, we used the rubric provided by the library and modified it slightly to be more in-line with Environmental Theory writing guidelines. Second, using the attached rubric, we normed our scores on a thesis paper from last year. We were all pretty close to each other's scores and realized that we were all looking at the paper the same way in terms of our expectations, but one would give it a 3 while the other a 4. After discussion, we came to a consensus and moved on. This only took one department meeting session since we had all read the thesis before coming to the meeting. Third, we randomly distributed four papers to each faculty member (2 capstone and 2 theses). Everyone had two months to read their four papers and score them directly on the rubric. Finally, we came together in February, one person tabulated all of the scores into a spreadsheet. It was organized into a table for us by the Office of Academic Assessment.

4. Description and discussion of results

	Attribution	Evaluation of Evidence	Communication of Evidence	Adherence to ET writing Style Guidelines
Highly Developed	12	14	10	10
Developed	7	6	5	0
Emerging	1	0	5	9
Initial	0	0	0	1

What we found was that most students do very well with attribution and evaluation of evidence, but some students have trouble with communicating their findings in writing and following ET writing guidelines. In terms of communicating, we find it is more of a structural problem than ability problem because when it is done, it is done well, but referencing the literature is not done consistently and lacks some integration and synthesis as part of the bigger picture. In other words, the ET writing guidelines are just being missed by a good number of students and not being followed.

5. Field Group recommendations for academic year 2014-15.

Our recommendations for addressing the gaps we found are as follows:

- All faculty should comment on student papers and reinforce the use of ET writing guidelines in all upper division EJT courses. This will help to reinforce what the guidelines are and help students be aware of them earlier in their academic career prior to taking the thesis or capstone courses.
- In the thesis or capstone courses, greater emphasis will be placed on students being able to link evidence/literature to their main topic and the bigger picture. We will most likely use multiple methods of teaching this to students depending on the individual faculty member, but the focus will be to link statements back to the bigger picture.
- We will consider offering an ET writing workshop in conjunction with the Writing Center, but we will need to discuss this with the Director of the Writing Center to see if this makes sense.

6. Proposed assessment plan for academic year 2014-15.

Next year, we plan on assessing SLO#2 (Students will be able to identify key historical points in Environmental Justice, and evaluate the degree to which current US Environmental Policies are tied to key points in EJT). This specific SLO is tied to EJT 555 (Environmental Justice: Past, Present, and Future) that is co-taught. As such, two faculty will take the primary lead in the reading and scoring, but all faculty will be involved in the interpretation of findings and writing of the assessment report.