Oklahoma State University

Assessment Report
2003 - 2004

Executive Summary

Submitted to
The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education
December 2004

Office of University Assessment and Testing
210 Public Information Building
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078-6043
405-744-6687
email: pam.lumpkin@okstate.edu
website: www.okstate.edu/assess

Oklahoma State University
Annual Assessment Report, 2003-04

Executive Summary

Entry-Level Assessment

Three methods are used for entry-level assessment at Oklahoma State University (OSU): the ACT, a locally-developed predictive statistical model called Entry Level Placement Analysis (ELPA), and COMPASS, the ACT Computer Adaptive Placement and Support System placement tests. The first stage of entry-level assessment is the ACT subject area test scores; an ACT subscore of 19 or above (or SAT equivalent) automatically qualifies a student for college-level coursework in that subject area. The ACT Reading subscore is used to indicate readiness for courses in reading-intensive introductory courses in Sociology, Political Science, Psychology, History, Economics, and Philosophy. The second stage of entry-level assessment is ELPA; it is a multiple regression model that uses high school grades, high school class rank and size, and ACT scores to predict student grades in entry-level courses. Students scoring below a 19 on the ACT subject area test *and* with predicted grades from ELPA of less than "C" in a particular subject area are recommended for remedial coursework. All first-time OSU students are assessed using the ACT and ELPA prior to enrollment. The third level of assessment is the COMPASS placement tests; students who are not cleared for enrollment in college level courses via their ACT scores or ELPA results may waive a remedial course requirement by passing a COMPASS test. Students who are missing ACT information or high school grade information needed for ELPA may also take the COMPASS placement test to waive a remedial course requirement.

In 2003-04, entry-level assessment was conducted for all admitted and enrolled new freshmen and new transfer students with fewer than 24 credit hours (n=4,328). After all stages of entry-level assessment were completed, 617 new students (14.3% of the total number enrolled) were recommended to take at least one remedial course. Of these, 86 (2.0%) were recommended to enroll in remedial English (UNIV 0133); 515 (11.9%) needed remedial math (UNIV 0123); 173 (4.0%) needed remedial science (UNIV 0111), and 67 (1.5%) were recommended to enroll in a course focused on reading and study skills (CIED 1230) (note: some students are required to take remedial courses in more than one subject area).

Additional entry-level assessments used at OSU include the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey and the Noel-Levitz College Student Inventory. The CIRP Freshman Survey is a university-wide survey that is conducted in alternate years and will be conducted in Fall 2004. The College Student Inventory by Noel-Levitz, Inc., is a retention-management tool that may be used to identify potential problem areas for new students and is used each year in the College of Human Environmental Sciences.

General Education Assessment

OSU's assessment program uses three tools to evaluate student achievement of the expected learning outcomes for general education and the effectiveness of the general education curriculum: (1) institutional portfolios, (2) university-wide surveys, and (3) a general education course content database. Each of these three methods is aimed at evaluating expected student learning outcomes that are articulated in the *OSU General Education Course Area Designations Criteria and Goals* document (Appendix C). Revisions to this document were approved in 2004, to facilitate more effective assessment of student learning goals. General education assessment is also guided by the

university's mission statement and the purpose of general education as articulated in the OSU catalog.

Institutional Portfolios directly assess student achievement of the primary learner goals for general education. Separate portfolios are developed to evaluate each general education learner goal, and each portfolio includes students' work from course assignments collected throughout the undergraduate curriculum. Faculty members (including assessment committee members and additional faculty members involved in undergraduate teaching) work in groups to evaluate the work in each portfolio and assess student achievement of the learner goal by using standardized scoring rubrics. The results provide a measure of the extent to which students are achieving OSU's expected general education competencies.

In 2003-04, institutional portfolios were used to evaluate student written communication skills and science problem solving skills, and a process to assess critical thinking skills was developed and tested. The writing skills portfolio includes student work from OSU students from all classes (freshmen through seniors) and disciplines; the student work included in the science portfolio is primarily from freshmen and sophomores taking lower division science courses. Each 'artifact' of student work in the institutional portfolios is evaluated by a team of faculty reviewers and scored using a 5-point rubric, where a score of 5 represents excellent work. For writing assessment, 69% of students received a score of 3 or higher (representing acceptable, good, or very good work). Portfolio results show that seniors demonstrate significantly better writing skills than freshmen. For science assessment, 69% of students received a score of 3 or higher.   Each year, the use of institutional portfolios is expanded to cover additional general education student learner goals.

University-wide surveys such as the National Survey of Student Engagement and OSU Alumni Surveys indirectly assess student achievement of general education learner goals and are used to corroborate evidence collected from the institutional portfolio process. For example, the General Education Advisory Coucncil (GEAC) used results from the National Survey of Student Engagement (conducted in 2000 and 2002), in conjunction with institutional portfolio results, to assess the general education program. After review of assessment results, GEAC implemented new standards to increase opportunities for students to develop written communication skills in general education courses.

The web-based General Education Course Database is used to evaluate how well each general education course is aligned with the expected learning outcomes for the general education program. Instructors are asked to submit their course information online via a web-based form, and the General Education Advisory Council reviews the submitted information during regular course reviews. Instructors identify which general education learning goals are associated with the course and describe course activities that provide students with opportunities to achieve those learning goals. The database provides a tool for summarizing general education course offerings and evaluating the extent to which the overall general education goals are met across the curriculum.

OSU's general education assessment methods are aimed at holistically evaluating student achievement of general education outcomes and critically evaluating the curriculum itself by evaluating how each course incorporates general education learner goals. Institutional portfolios and university-wide surveys are implemented such that student participants are anonymous; therefore, these methods do not permit tracking individual students into future semesters. Information from general education assessment is presented annually to the General Education Advisory Council, Assessment Council, Instruction Council, and Faculty Council. The process has generated attention to student learning, general education outcomes, and how individual general education courses provide opportunities for students to develop general education knowledge and

skills. Four years after implementation, these assessments are yielding interesting results and influencing change at several institutional levels.

Program Outcomes Assessment

All OSU degree programs, including undergraduate and graduate programs, must have an outcomes assessment plan and must submit an annual assessment report describing assessment activity. Assessment plans and reports may be submitted by colleges, schools, departments, or by individual degree programs, depending on the organizational level that faculty from these programs have elected to use for assessment. The Assessment Council periodically reviews all assessment plans and reports; this year the schedule for these reviews was modified to support the Academic Program Review (APR) process. Since documentation of the use of assessment results for program development is now requested for the APR process, the Assessment Council will review and provide feedback on outcomes assessment one year in advance of the program's participation in Academic Program Review.

Academic units use a broad range of methods to assess student achievement of the learning outcomes articulated in assessment plans, and these are described in detail in the individual assessment reports submitted by each unit. The most commonly used program outcomes assessment methods reported in 2003-04 were:

- Capstone course projects, papers, presentations evaluated by faculty or by outside reviewers
- Senior-level projects & presentations
- Course-embedded assessments & classroom assessment techniques
- Exams – local comprehensive exams, local entry-to-program exams
- Exams – standardized national exams, certification or licensure exams,
- Exit interviews
- Internships – evaluations from supervisors, faculty members, student participants
- Portfolios - reviewed internally or externally

- Projects, portfolios, exhibits, or performances – evaluated by professional jurors or evaluators
- Student performance in intercollegiate competitions
- Surveys - alumni
- Surveys - employers / recruiters
- Surveys – students, esp. seniors
- Surveys – faculty
- Enrollment data, student academic performance in particular courses, student participation in extracurricular activities related to the discipline, degree completion rates, time-to-degree completion
- Alumni employment tracking

Graduate programs reported the following outcomes assessment methods *in addition to* the methods described above:

- Qualifying exams
- Theses / dissertations / creative component papers, projects, presentations, and defenses

- Comprehensive exams
- Research activity / publications / professional presentations / professional activity

In addition to these outcomes assessment methods, the Office of University Assessment and Testing coordinates alumni and student surveys and provides program-specific results of these surveys to academic programs so that faculty may use this information for program outcomes assessment.

In keeping with the guidelines of the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association and the policy of the OSU Assessment Council, faculty are encouraged to develop effective program outcomes assessment methods that will provide meaningful information for program development and improvement. The Assessment Council reviews of outcomes assessment programs show that most degree programs are satisfactorily implementing their assessment plans and using assessment results for program development and improvement. Academic units are encouraged, but not required, to use assessment methods that may provide comparison of student performance with statewide or national norms. Programs that use such assessments report their findings in their individual annual outcomes assessment reports (Appendix E).

The number of individuals who participate in each outcomes assessment method within each academic unit is shown in Table 12.1 and is described in detail in the individual assessment reports submitted by each academic unit (Appendix E). Academic units are required to report the number of individuals assessed *in each assessment method.* Because the same students are assessed by multiple methods, the reporting process does not provide an accurate count of the total number of students that participated in outcomes assessment. Outcomes assessment reports demonstrate that academic programs use multiple assessment methods and a majority of students within each program participate in outcomes assessment measures.   The sum of all individuals who participated in all assessment methods is 22,564, but this total includes multiple counts of the same students (because students participate in multiple assessment methods) and also may include non-students (because, the 'number of individuals assessed' in an alumni survey or employer survey, for example, would reflect numbers of alumni or employers, respectively, rather than current students).

Uses of assessment results are unique to each program but can be generally categorized as sharing assessment information with faculty members, developing curriculum changes in response to assessment findings, and using assessment results to justify curriculum changes that have recently been implemented. The most commonly cited uses of assessment results in 2003-04 were:

- Changes in course content
- Addition / deletion of courses
- Changes in degree requirements or degree sheet options
- Development of tutorial and academic services for students
- Justification of past curriculum changes and to show program improvement resulting from those changes
- Refinement of the assessment methods or to implement new assessment methods

- Changes in course sequences
- Changes in advising processes
- Facilitate curriculum discussions at faculty meetings, curriculum committee meetings, and faculty retreats
- Changes to student facilities such as computer labs and science labs
- Development of program-based websites to provide students with academic and program information

Student and Alumni Satisfaction Assessment

Student and alumni surveys are conducted to evaluate student and alumni perceptions of academic and campus programs and services, and the results are used in developing and improving those programs and services. The surveys complement program outcomes assessment because they are designed to provide feedback from students and alumni for use in continuous quality improvement in academic and student programs.

Alumni surveys are conducted every year at OSU; undergraduate program alumni and graduate program alumni are surveyed in alternate years. The surveys are intended to identify institutional strengths and areas for improvement as perceived by recent graduates; to track the careers and continuing education of recent OSU graduates; and to evaluate achievement of learning outcomes as perceived by alumni from individual academic programs. The alumni surveys target alumni who are 1- and 5-years post-graduation. The surveys are conducted as telephone interviews, and the questionnaire covers employment, continued education, and general satisfaction. Also, individual academic programs may include program-specific questions in the questionnaire for their program alumni; these data are used in program outcomes assessment as well as assessing alumni satisfaction. Alumni surveys have become a cornerstone of assessment at the university-, college- and program- level by providing regular feedback from OSU graduates about their perceptions of their educational experiences at OSU and its impact on their career and personal development.

The Undergraduate Program Alumni Survey was conducted in January 2004, and 2,520 alumni responded to the survey out of a target population of 5,875 graduates (response rate = 43%). Most alumni (94%) stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied in their educational experiences at OSU, and 93% indicated that their undergraduate program prepared them very well or adequately for their current career. About 68% of the alumni contacted for the survey were residing in Oklahoma, and about 32% were contacted out of state.

Graduate Student Assessment

Student outcomes assessment in graduate programs is part of Program Outcomes Assessment and is reported in that section of this report. In addition, a Graduate Student Satisfaction Survey is conducted in alternate years and the Office of University Assessment and Testing conducts the Survey of Alumni of Graduate Programs in alternate years. These university-wide assessments provide university- and program-level assessment information about graduate students. A Graduate Student Satisfaction Survey will be conducted in Fall 2004, and the third Survey of Alumni of Graduate Programs will be conducted in spring 2005.

What's New in Assessment at OSU in 2003-04:

- *Continued Development of General Education Assessment.* OSU is in its fourth year of implementing a general education assessment plan that was developed in 2000. The process uses three methods (institutional portfolios, university-wide surveys, and a course content database) to evaluate the extent to which students are achieving the articulated learning goals for the general education program. Results of the assessment of students' written communication skills prompted the General Education Advisory Council to increase requirements for writing assignments in some general education courses. A process for assessment of students' critical thinking skills was tested in 2003-04, and an institutional portfolio of student work samples will be developed for assessment in 2005.

- *Professional Development Sessions for Faculty and Assessment Coordinators.* The General Education Assessment Committee and the Assessment Council plan to provide a series of professional development sessions for faculty and assessment coordinators in 2004-05. In Fall 2004, these groups are scheduled to present sessions titled "Developing and Assessing Critical Thinking," "Using Portfolios for Outcomes Assessment," "Effective Departmental Outcomes Assessment," and "Regional Accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission." Additional sessions are planned on the process and results of general education assessment since its inception in 2000, and effective outcomes assessment for graduate programs. In addition, the Assessment Council agreed to provide additional funding to support faculty travel to conferences and workshops on assessment.

- *Assessment Council Reviews of Outcomes Assessment Programs Integrated with Academic Program Review Process.* In Spring 2004, the OSU Assessment Council approved a modification to its schedule for review of program outcomes assessment. Beginning in Fall 2004, outcomes assessment for each degree program will be reviewed one year in advance of the program's participation in the Academic Program Review (APR) process. The APR process now requests documentation of each program's assessment activities, so this schedule modification will allow for feedback from the Assessment Council well in advance of the Academic Program Review. Past assessment reviews have resulted in greater communication and understanding of outcomes assessment and what academic units should be doing. Almost three-quarters of the academic units have revised their assessment plans or otherwise demonstrated greater commitment to outcomes assessment in their programs as a result of feedback received from the Assessment Council Reviews.

- *Student Satisfaction with the Northern Oklahoma College / Oklahoma State University Gateway Program* (Appendix A). An important special assessment project in Spring 2003 was the development of an assessment plan for evaluating the impact of remedial courses offered to OSU students by NOC faculty at their new Stillwater campus. This assessment process will be tracked through future OSU Annual Assessment Reports.

- *2004 Survey of Alumni of Undergraduate Programs* (Appendix D). The Office of University Assessment conducted the second university-wide survey of alumni of OSU undergraduate programs in January 2004. Results from these alumni surveys have become a cornerstone of the assessment efforts for most OSU academic units and provide valuable information about the career patterns of recent graduates.

Additional information about OSU's assessment program is available on the Internet at **www.okstate.edu/assess.**