

Board of Higher Education (BHE)
Student Assessment Policy
Update

Office of Academic Planning and
Assessment

Faculty Senate Presentation

April 12, 2001

Board of Higher Education Assessment Policy

September 1998

“The BHE shall implement a two-tiered system of student assessment to be administered within the public system of higher education to assess :

- *the academic skills of entering students*
- *the college-level competencies of all students prior to graduation.”*

Assessment of Entering Competencies

Assessment implementation in place:

- Writing
- Math
- Reading

Initial Charge to BHE Taskforce on College-Level Competencies Assessment

September 16, 1998

- Competency assessment will begin with students at all four-year campuses.
- Assessment should reflect general education objectives: at a minimum it will include verbal & quantitative literacy and critical thinking.
- Explore possibilities for assessing Computer Literacy

Initial Charge (*cont.*)

- Only nationally normed general education assessments should be used.
- All students would have to achieve passing score determined by the BHE to graduate.

UMass President's Office Response

September 24, 1998

"...[T]he University of Massachusetts will have no choice but to administer the standardized test selected by the Board of Higher Education. However, the University will not make performance on this test a requirement for graduation....National standardized exams constitute only one form of assessment, potentially the weakest. But the most important point is that if the assessment is to be accepted as valid and relevant to the institution, it must be developed (or at least selected) from within to match the objectives of the programs being assessed. A national standardized exam required by fiat from an external agency is unlikely to be accepted as a valid or relevant indicator of institutional performance or as a useful diagnostic tool for improving programs."

Selma Botman, VP for Academic Affairs

BHE Task Force Work

- UMass campuses did not participate in initial work of the Task Force
- Task Force, made up of representatives from CC and State Colleges met over more than a year and made recommendations regarding implementation of policy:

Task Force Recommendations

- Focus on Verbal Literacy and Critical Thinking, defer Quantitative and Computer Literacy (*Proposed outcome statements from the BHE Task Force available for comment*)
- Assessment administered when students have completed between 60 - 90 credit hours.
- Allow some flexibility in choice of instruments

Test Instrument Flexibility:

“The Task Force concluded that no instrument presently exists that will achieve precisely what the Board is seeking (i.e., criterion referenced, nationally normed, available in multiple forms) nor is there one instrument that the group is convinced would be most appropriate for systemwide application in any one skill area.”

Assessment Test Options

- Academic Profile Essay (ETS)
- CAAP Writing Test & CAAP Critical Thinking Test (ACT) or California Critical Thinking Skills Test (Faccione)
- UMass Boston Writing Proficiency Exam
- Campuses can propose other approaches for pilot testing

Pilot test results due June 2002

UMA campus steps taken so far:

- Identified Working Group of faculty and staff to guide campus action. Current Members:

- ☞ Marcia Curtis, Writing Program
- ☞ Ralph Faulkingham, Anthropology
- ☞ Steve Goodwin, Microbiology
- ☞ Dennis Hanno, Accounting
- ☞ Anne Herrington, English
- ☞ Marilyn Blaustein, OIR
- ☞ Bryan Harvey, OAPA
- ☞ Martha Stassen, OAPA

Steps so far (*cont.*):

- Outlined principles guiding the selection of the assessment process. The process and information gathered should:
 - ◆ be useful to students and their learning
 - ◆ be useful to faculty in informing pedagogy and curriculum in general education and the major
- Currently exploring the feasibility of adapting the UMB model for UMA use.

Among the issues still to be addressed:

- Determining costs and funding/support
- Building on current processes, avoid duplication of effort
- Clarifying how results will be used