

Appendix

To: AcAB

From: Assessment Committee

Date: April 2014

SALT – Impetus for Review

- The Assessment Committee created a task group in September, 2013 charged to assess the effectiveness of SALT and recommend changes to the Assessment Committee
- AcAB conducted a faculty survey in which 46% of respondents indicated that discussion is needed and change in SALT is probably or definitely needed

Assessment Committee Analysis

Weaknesses in validity of questions & dissemination of results:

- SALT questions 8-20 were designed for Teagle grant to assess General Education objectives, but are not relevant to non-gen ed courses, which further entrenches faculty perceptions that SALT results are not relevant to their course and teaching effectiveness
- It is questionable whether students can truly evaluate questions 8-20 in meaningful ways
- The dissemination of data from questions 8-20 is of questionable use to department chairs who receive aggregate reports of these very generalized learning outcomes for department courses (e.g., the Math Department is not surprised to see that they have a high score on the use of math to solve problems, and the Humanities departments are not surprised to see that they do not).
- SALT questions 22-32 address teaching effectiveness, there are at least four limitations of this section: a) analyzing single-item teaching effectiveness questions is not a statistically reliable practice, making the validity of the items questionable; b) the depth of information provided by the items is quite limited and it is therefore difficult to utilize the data for teaching improvement; c) course-related questions – such as value and effectiveness of materials, texts, exercises, labs, pedagogical approaches, etc. – are not assessed; d) course learning and learning objectives are not assessed.
- The dissemination of SALT to instructors only does not meet student expectations that their feedback will be utilized in evaluation of teaching effectiveness
- The dissemination of SALT to instructors only does not help chairs improve teaching within their departments/programs
- Faculty Objectives survey does not appear to be utilized
- In sum – SALT attempts to assess both the goals of the General Education Program and individual courses and instructors, and does not do both adequately.

Strengths in utilization and implementation:

- Many students highly value the opportunity to evaluate courses and instructors
- There are faculty who value SALT data for teaching effectiveness and for collecting research data on teaching effectiveness for particular pedagogical programs or comparisons
- Departments have been encouraged by the Assessment Committee over the last two years to utilize the SALT platform for department assessment by adding customized questions for all courses in the department

- The General Education Director utilizes aggregate data from general education courses
- Instructors may add additional items customized for a particular course
- The platform and implementation of SALT (thanks to Ryan McFall) works very well
- SALT has been established as a recognizable process for both students and faculty which sustains awareness and buy-in

Proposals for Discussion by AcAB

We need a systematic system of assessment at several levels of the institution that provides valuable data on the effectiveness of: (a) General Education curriculum in meeting General Education learning objectives, (b) department/program curricula in meeting major learning objectives, and (c) course content and teaching effectiveness in meeting course-specific learning objectives.

- Separate campus-wide assessment of general education from teaching effectiveness evaluation. Dedicate 2014-15 to the revision of SALT content within existing SALT platform, to be fully implemented by 2015-16.
- Develop an instrument for campus-wide assessment for seniors only that assesses general education learning objectives and provides useful data for department/program-level assessment
 - On option to be evaluated is to revise the General Education Learning Objectives (GELO) questions and administer, via the existing SALT platform, to Senior Seminar students only, as they are best able to reflect upon these objectives in light of their overall general education experience at Hope College
 - Provide departments and programs the opportunity to add on customized questions for their department/program majors or develop several standardized questions useful for department/program-level assessment (the results of which can be reported out by major)
 - Merge the GELO questions with students transcript data so GELO can be analyzed in light of which general education courses students have taken (this sounds complicated but is really quite simple to do if Banner works)
 - It might also be possible to devise this instrument to be administered to first-year and senior students to assess change in these learning objectives over college career
 - The questions on this instrument should be specific to Hope College general education learning objectives and not replicate college-wide assessment information we are collecting through NSSE, HEDS and GPI.
- Create a comprehensive instructor and course assessment that is relevant and useful for improving teaching, with full-implementation by 2015-16.
 - Require instructors/departments to develop their own course/department-level questions for individual courses, to assess instructor effectiveness, course materials, and learning objectives. The results of these assessments would be available only to the individual instructor and would be used for instructor development purposes. This could easily be managed by individual instructors by using Survey Monkey or other simple online survey tools. Departments should

have a process for sharing and/or discussing this data to inform teaching, course content, and curricula.

- One option that should be evaluated is administering the SIR for all instructors every three years, the results of which are available to chairs, deans and the Status Committee, as well as individual instructors, for evaluation purposes. This data is statistically reliable, valid and nationally normed. Moreover, it calls all instructors to accountability for continually working to improve teaching effectiveness and provides assurance to students that their evaluations of all instructors are utilized appropriately by the college.
- Develop a peer-assessment program to provide additional assessment of teaching beyond student assessment, perhaps also on a 3-year rotation, to supplement evaluation and instructor development processes. This would provide an opportunity to recognize, share and reward innovative pedagogical practices that are not reflected on standardized forms.

Implementation

It seems that development of course and instructor evaluation instruments and procedures is under the auspices of AcAB, and aid to the General Education Director to develop general education assessment and aid to departments to develop department-level assessment would fall to the Assessment Committee.