

---

**General Education Assessment**  
AQIP Action Project #1349  
Central Arizona College  
Review of 2009 Annual Update  
Submitted 09/11/09  
Reviewed 09/11/09 (available 09/15/09)

---

**A. Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project.**

As of fall 2009, Central Arizona College (CAC) continues active status as a Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Assessment Academy participant. CAC's 2007 Assessment Academy (AA) Team of five developed the original action project charter. In spring 2009, in support of broadening participation throughout the institution, a reformulated AA Team attended the HLC's Workshop, "Making a Difference in Student Learning: Assessment as a Core Strategy" to develop a plan for assessing the updated General Education Outcomes (GEOs) and standards.

Based on the updated GEOs, a three-year implementation plan will gradually introduce the GEOs throughout the CAC curriculum and assessment process. The Communication and Mathematical/Scientific Inquiry and Analysis GEO Subcommittees are slated for year one (2009-2010); Technological Literacy and Cultural and Artistic Heritage GEO Subcommittees begin spring 2010; and in the third year, Critical Thinking and Analytical Reasoning and Individual and Social Responsibility GEO Subcommittees begin spring 2011. Using the feedback from the first two GEO Subcommittees, the earlier launch date allows Subcommittee teams to increase their productivity and launch a pilot in the spring or summer rather than waiting until fall semester. Also, due to faculty contracts expiring mid-May and resuming mid-August, the summer months are somewhat less productive.

Thus far, the (1) Communication GEO pilot results include:

- Building upon an existing CAC RDG094 critical reading assessment pilot from fall 2008 through spring 2009, added a Summer 2009 RDG094 section;
- Research on rubrics adaptable and appropriate for Communication GEO (IUPUI, NCSU resources and others); best rubric templates evaluated and customized for CAC;
- Using Mathematics GEO rubric with a 4-point scale for ease of use by faculty and for consistency in CAC rubric format, created Communication GEO rubric and presented it to Communication department during regular meeting, per the agenda; additional input gathered, consensus achieved;
- Testing the rubric twice after peer review and several rounds of improvement; CQI via one-on-one meetings and email;
- Pilot analysis of 12 students using newly created RDG094 rubric;
- Preliminary results shared with GEO Executive Subcommittee 07/28/09;
- Preliminary results shared with Communication department;
- Expansion of rubric to accommodate all communication courses for implementation fall 2009;
- Preliminary results shared with CAC Student Learning Assessment Committee 08/27/09;
- Implementation of rubric in all RDG094 sections spring 2010;

- Expansion of rubric for all CAC courses with communication GEOs embedded;
- Determination of how to map the communication GEO within each CAC degree program;
- Executive Summary in process.

The (2) Mathematics GEO pilot results include:

- Developing process steps;
- Piloting newly created rubrics in all MAT151 sections fall 2009;
- Plan for analysis with pilot completion date spring 2010;
- Executive Summary to be created spring/summer 2010;

CAC Process Steps identified thus far:

1. Create cross-disciplinary team with CAC constituents from each area;
2. Target specific GEO relative to Student Learning Outcomes;
3. Memo sent to all faculty about pilot study and CAC assessment leaders;
4. Identify course and/or GEO standards to pilot;
5. Use data, i.e. Institutional Research to generate report targeting most popular courses, AGEC courses, required degree courses, or other valid criteria for selection of pilot;
6. Conduct survey to determine current assessment activities, rubrics, and plans;
7. Create preliminary assessment plan;
8. Share plan with AQIP, Institutional Effectiveness, Student Learning Assessment Directors, and CAO;
9. Meet with department heads and division chairs involved; secure consensus and support;
10. Meet face-to-face with each faculty member who may be involved in the pilot; secure consensus and support;
11. Use feedback from these meetings to improve plan, refine rubric(s), improve communication processes;
12. If needed, modify curriculum and submit in ACRES with curriculum mentor and department chair approval no later than April 1<sup>st</sup> to ensure curriculum committee review prior to the pilot and summer break;
13. Update standard course syllabus with department after the curriculum is approved, including adding GEOs;
14. Refine grading rubrics: one may be class-based and one GEO-based;
15. Strategize with committee and colleagues to gather input and suggestions for improvement/refinement of plan timeline, rubrics, implementation, communication to students and others, analysis steps, and improvement cycle;
16. Refine instruments with the team and department(s);
17. Test instruments on a small scale prior to pilot; faculty agree upon instruments—number and length, timing, environment, other requirements, testing conditions, time allotted, use of results, impact on course requirements/student grades;
18. Establish GEO Evaluation Assessment Team and define the team's charge, scope, and timeline (Math: six faculty across mathematical specialty areas);
19. Revise tests as needed (2 revised);
20. Determine student population based on 45-day count from which sample population drawn;
21. Ensure anonymity for students and faculty;

22. Build in demographic data: number of courses/credits completed in GEO area at CAC, et al;
23. Present plan and rubrics to Science Division (August 2009);
24. Implement;
25. Record and respond to faculty concerns, including department chairs via emails;
26. Consult with CAC colleagues, CAO, AQIP, Assessment Academy, and Student Learning Assessment colleagues to address concerns;
27. Present results to GEO Executive Subcommittee and other key stakeholders;
28. Communicate GEO pilot to CAC district-wide;
29. Gather suggestions for improvement throughout the process/assessment cycle;
30. Report key findings to Assessment Academy and AQIP;
31. Review suggestions for improvement, conduct additional research, and target most valuable changes to implement;
32. Repeat the process cycle.

**Review (09-11-09):**

*CAC has made significant progress towards achieving assessment goals. Utilization of AQIP training and expertise indicates foresight as you develop a plan that supports AQIP Principles. Although the thirty-two step process is somewhat granular, it provides a process that is clear, focused, involves key stakeholders, and leaves little question of what will occur. It might be helpful to indicate the intended outcome of each step, at least of those that have yet to be completed. For some steps of the process you have made it clear the intent (e.g., 29, 30, and 31). Others are less clear. For example, step 2 is "Consult with CAC colleagues, CAO, AQIP, Assessment Academy, and Student Learning Assessment colleagues to address concerns." Is the purpose of this to resolve issues that impede progress so that all involved are satisfied with moving forward? Clarity will eliminate confusion and expedite the steps.*

**B. Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project.**

Following presentations to CAC faculty at the spring 2008 Faculty Development Day on the importance of General Education Outcomes (GEOs), the CAC Assessment Team continued this focus by delivering presentations during the staff professional development days in April to both the Support Staff and the Managerial and Technical Staff. The CAC Assessment Team consists of the Director of Curriculum and Student Learning Assessment, the Director of Accreditation and Quality Initiatives (AQIP Liaison), and the Executive Director of Institutional Research and Planning.

During the fall 2009 in-service (attended by the entire district), a national expert on Student Learning Assessment presented the keynote address followed by the AQIP Liaison's quality update, which included updates from each of the action project leaders. Facilitated small group discussions (20-30 people each) focusing on key questions related to assessment followed these presentations. Recorders captured responses and suggestions and the AQIP Liaison's aggregation of the results will be initially shared with CAC's president and vice presidents, and then distributed district-wide.

Presentations to each Dean's team, consisting of faculty chairs and divisions heads, begins

September 8, 2009, to appraise them of the progress on the GEO Assessment Pilot and plans for the 2009-2010 academic year. In addition, two faculty led subcommittees with diverse representation are implementing pilot assessments and two additional subcommittees are forming to begin work on assessing the next two GEOs: Technological Literacy and Cultural and Artistic Heritage.

**Review (09-11-09):**

*The process of involving faculty, staff and administrators has been multi-faceted and interactive through multiple venues including presentations and small group discussions. The strategies provided while helpful are contingent upon active participation in face-to-face events which may limit input from everyone at different points of the project life cycle. It may be helpful to make publically accessible the progress of the project through a General Education Assessment Project website. Not only would such an information repository provide access to data, decisions, and plans, but it can also provide a venue for input from stakeholders through forms, polls, surveys, or email links. Such a strategy can increase involvement and buy-in. Continued reporting on progress, along with involvement of faculty, staff, and administration, is key to the success of the project.*

**C. Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.**

The dual-pronged GEO-Mathematical/Scientific Inquiry and Analysis has gained momentum only within the mathematics department. Our goal is to assess both disciplines, and thus far, the mathematics and science divisions have determined separate rubrics and perhaps a separate pilot in the sciences will be needed. The Science Division chair will forward feedback to the Team for further review and finalization.

The GEO Subcommittees for (1) Communication and (2) Mathematical/Scientific Inquiry and Analysis will continue their assessment plans throughout fall 2009 and spring 2010. The next two GEO Subcommittees, Technological Literacy and Cultural and Artistic Heritage are continuing to secure members with a beginning meeting date of January 2010.

The CAC Assessment Team has begun meeting with the Dean of Student Life and Director of Student Engagement to discuss co-curricular assessment with a possible pilot fall 2009.

The Student Learning Assessment (SLA) Committee will establish a process for maintaining a three-year continuous review cycle for the GEOs.

**Review (09-11-09):**

*It appears that the project is struggling to unite and expedite the GEO-Mathematical/Scientific Inquiry and Analysis pilot. It is not clear at what step in the aforementioned process this group has stopped functioning, but it may help to hold regular meetings with the key participants from the two disciplines. Also, involving both areas to come to consensus about the process, pilot implementation and reporting may identify areas of concern. You might consider a simple website that publicly documents progress (see B and E) so that progress is public and documented against time lines and benchmarks. It is critical to attend to this pilot since it serves as the model and exemplar for those to follow.*

**D. Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project.**

1. Building the process steps through identification, sharing with the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (SLOA) Committee, GEO Executive Subcommittee, departments, divisions, deans, Academic Leadership, and others, and revision;
2. Outlining a manageable timeline for subsequent GEO Subcommittees;
3. Communicating regularly at CAC events on Assessment Progress and thus building a culture of Assessment, including co-curricular and service areas;
4. Developing rubrics by each subcommittee which will serve as models for future subcommittees and may be further generalized for cross-disciplinary use;
5. Conducting benchmark visits of peer institutions, such as San Juan College, to gather and share best practices, refined processes and rubrics, and strategies for avoiding assessment pitfalls;
6. Using multiple modes of communication to ensure all data collection processes are coordinated through the Office of Institutional Research and Planning;
7. Continuing license agreement with WorkKeys and KeyTrain to conduct pre- and post-assessments to ensure CAC's students are workforce ready; these tests are recognized as industry gold standards;
8. Developing, implementing, and coordinating with existing professional growth opportunities, a multi-tiered curriculum training program concluding with satisfaction surveys, to improve and expand the institution's knowledge of assessment;
9. Increasing the number and accessibility of assessment resources and updating the curriculum handbook based on feedback from internal focus groups; and
10. Recognizing the importance of assessing all student learning, including learning outside the classroom, the college has dedicated a director to spearhead this initiative.

**Review (09-11-09):**

*CAC's effective practices reflect most of AQIP's Principles including involvement of stakeholders (including contractors, faculty, staff, and administration), a clear focus on assessment, intentional and strategic collaboration among academic and student service units, and continual dissemination of information.*

**E. What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project?**

CAC continues to experience district reorganization and restructuring, including change of personnel in key positions. , including the future retirement of the Vice President of Academic Programs and Services will retire as well as other key Vice Presidents of Finance and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Advancement. The AQIP Liaison continues her second year in the position, yet has identified the need for mentoring others in this key role.

Other challenges include identifying process owners of the newly systematized processes of student learning assessment system-wide to serve as gatekeepers, guides, and process experts. These change strategies will ensure CAC maintains momentum, continues support of district-wide assessment and reporting, and that communication lines remain strong.

**Review (09-11-09):**

*While changes in administrative leadership may be distracting from the project's goals, it can also provide an opportunity to involve others in taking leadership, as you are doing by identifying gatekeepers, guides, and process experts. As a strategy to make the process transparent and create institutional history and ownership, you might consider providing a simple website where goals, benchmarks, participants, timelines and accomplishments can be publicized. This can make the process more 'real' and provide the restructured offices and new administrators a bigger picture of the plan and progress.*

**F. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help to stimulate progress on this action project, explain your need(s) here and tell us who to contact and when?**

Expert advice and assistance is appreciated, especially as it pertains to securing faculty commitment to the assessment cycle, developing and maintaining a culture of assessment, and providing the best resources as templates, including rubrics.

**Review (09-11-09):**

*9904 - This institution is making reasonable progress towards its project.*