

Program/Department and Major(s): Environmental Justice Theory

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

Last year we assessed SO#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 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 SO before other faculty read and scored an SO 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 SO#1 when we complete our next program review, which will occur in 2022. This will give us ample time to reflect on how we will revise the SO as part of the program review and conduct this revision as part of a review of the whole program.

2. Student Outcomes (See STEP 1: Identify Outcome(s) to be Assessed in the [Assessment Handbook](#))

All SOs can be found on our program website at <http://www.cooluniversity.edu/environmentaltheory>. They are also attached as appendix to this report. This year, we will be assessing SO#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 not be assessing SO#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 SO. We plan on continuing the process of assessing one SO each year until we have assessed each one.

3. Alignment between outcomes and learning opportunities (See STEP 2: Providing Aligned Student Experiences to Outcomes in the [Assessment Handbook](#))

There have been changes in our curriculum this past year. The changes were simply a re-numbering of a few of our upper division courses, and adding one course that we feel will help address a gap in our curriculum addressing student outcome 4.

4. Method for Assessing Student Learning (See STEP 3: Gathering Evidence of Student Achievement of Outcomes in the [Assessment Handbook](#))

We will be assessing SO#3 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 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.

SO#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, and Tommy tabulated all of the scores into a single spreadsheet.

5. Analysis of Evidence (See STEP 4: Analyzing Evidence in the [Assessment Handbook](#))

	Attribution	Evaluation of Evidence	Communication of Evidence	Adherence to ET Writing Style Guidelines
Highly Developed (4)	12	14	10	10
Developed (3)	7	6	5	0
Emerging (2)	1	0	5	9
Initial (1)	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. Specifically, some students are struggling with making sure that they communicate in a structured and well-organized manner that touches on all of their points. However, 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.

6. Share Results (See STEP 5: Documenting and Sharing Results in the [Assessment Handbook](#))

Results were shared with all faculty in email prior to our final faculty meeting. Faculty were asked to review the draft of the report with the findings and be prepared to discuss. At the faculty meeting, the report was discussed and recommendations were created as a group.

7. Recommendations/Next Steps (See STEP 6: Using What You Have Learned in the [Assessment Handbook](#))

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

8. Multi-year plans (See information about [Assessment Planning](#) online.)

Next year, we plan on assessing SO#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 SO 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.

9. Expanding Assessment Efforts

- a. In what ways have faculty in your department supported assessment efforts at UCR for the current academic year? Please check all that apply:
- Participated in an On-Campus Assessment Workshop
 - Submitted Student Work for Assessment of Core Competency
 - Participated on the Meta-Assessment Committee
 - Participated on the Assessment Advisory Committee
 - Participated in an Assessment Professional Development or Conference Off Campus

10. Appendices

Please make use of appendices to include other documents that seem relevant. You might include rubrics, assignments, examples of student work (with names removed), and documentation of discussion of assessment within the department or other documentation as it seems relevant.