Evaluation of Philosophy Department Assessment Procedures and Proposed Changes

The following assessment procedures have been in place since Spring 2002.

1. Multiple choice exit exams for all GE courses.
   a. Standardized exit exams for Philosophy 2, 4, and 6.
   b. Non standardized multiple choice exit exams for all other GE courses.

2. Graduating Senior Essay submissions, reviewed by Assessment Committee.

3. Periodic review of syllabi and assignments by the Curriculum Committee.

Evaluation

1. The multiple choice exams have been useful in fostering a culture of assessment; however, after four years it is clear that these tests have limited assessment value. The reasons are as follows:

   (a) The tests are not administered in a uniform manner, so it is not possible to form a reliable judgment about the reasons for differential student performance.

   (b) It is not feasible, as initially planned, to produce meaningful standardized tests for other GE courses.

   (c) Many instructors routinely do not administer the tests and will not be compelled to do so.

   (d) If the tests were, against the Committee’s better judgment, used as a basis for evaluating instructors, it is very likely that the tests themselves would become the focus of instruction, thereby actually compromising the quality of instruction out of concern for assessment performance.

2. Senior essay submissions have been useful. Most students submit an essay they wrote for a previous class, thus insuring that it is representative of their best graded work. Thanks to Ann, we are getting near total compliance. Trends in student writing and competence are visible as a result.

3. Review of syllabi and assignments is essential to maintain compliance with GE requirements, and to give new faculty oversight in creating syllabi adequate to the needs CSUS students.
Recommendations

1. The Assessment Committee recommends that the practice of standardized assessment tests be discontinued and supplanted with an Assessment Committee review of course materials.

Explanation

Currently it is the charge of the Curriculum Committee to review both syllabi and assignments. We propose that this labor intensive task be divided between the two committees so that the Curriculum Committee reviews only syllabi and the Assessment Committee reviews the assignments.

In lieu of standardized assessment tests, all faculty members should be required to submit, at the end of the semester, and in one electronic document (Tests, quizzes, study questions, midterms, final) all evaluation tools used during the semester for each GE course taught. The Assessment Committee would then be charged with the periodic review of such submissions, and a report thereof.

2. The Assessment Committee recommends adopting an additional assessment component modeled on visitation of part-time and probationary faculty.

Explanation

The classroom visitation of part-time faculty is a valuable assessment tool. However, it is formally a function of the ARTP Committee, since the reports are used for the purpose of evaluating probationary faculty, and ranking the part-time faculty.

Once tenured a member of the faculty no longer experiences classroom visitation from other colleagues (except by private arrangement, or as a result of a grievance procedure.) Hence, they receive no constructive criticism from colleagues regarding their classroom behavior or their teaching methods for the majority of their teaching careers.

To remedy this, the Assessment Committee proposes (as part of our departmental assessment procedures, not our ARTP procedures) that all full-time members of the faculty be visited by other full-time faculty members on a rotating basis once each semester, with visitation assignments being made by the Assessment Committee. Visiting faculty will make a report of their visitation and submit it to the Assessment Committee just as they currently do for part-time faculty.

The Committee also proposes that one Department Meeting per semester be devoted to the discussion of pedagogy. This meeting will be formally open to part-time faculty as well. At these meetings, on a rotating basis, individual faculty members will make presentations regarding pedagogical challenges and successes. Results of faculty visitations will also be discussed.