

Assessment Grant—Second & Final Year Report
College of Health Sciences: Program in Public Health
Shari Stern
March 23, 2010

Description of Assessment Project:

The program in Public Health (PH) and its two majors (PH Science and PH Policy) began in Fall of 2006. We have grown quickly; during the intervening three years we have accepted more than 600 major, so it was incumbent on us to develop an assessment program to ascertain the success of our program and how we were accomplishing our goals. I developed the PH Assessment Project to begin immediately and it ran from Fall 2008 through Winter 2010, involved 263 students, 13 different PH195W sections, and 6 different instructors. Assessment components included:

- Developing and establishing learning objectives for our two majors
- involving a series of independent readers of student papers to demonstrate meeting LO for the assignment, monitoring improvement, and deriving how to maintain continuity among graders
- developing and sending a survey to graduating seniors to view their perceptions of the PH and PH195W experience to view our strengths and weaknesses

The conclusions generated from this assessment project will help the faculty guide curriculum development to meet our new learning outcomes. It will also help us determine the success of the current Public Health program; to encourage faculty involvement in teaching, and to elucidate whether alternative pedagogical approaches might improve learning.

This project targeted the PH majors as well as our discipline-driven PH195W Practicum course that was developed to provide both experiential service learning and to teach upper division writing.

Accomplishments of this Assessment Project:

1. Developed and incorporated learning outcomes for the two majors, PH Policy and PH Science
2. Developed and incorporated learning outcomes for the PH195W Practicum course
3. Developed a Writing & Scoring Rubric for assessing student written work
4. Identified best methods for maintain consistency and accuracy among readers of student papers
4. Assessed the PH department's course requirements for the major to see how/ if the individual course's learning objectives articulated with our newly developed department learning objectives
5. Created and utilized a newly developed Perception Evaluation Survey of the PH majors and the PH195W Practicum course.
6. We have 6 data sets from 7 iterations of the questionnaire and 7 sets of evaluations of reader-scoring similarity, and student writing improvement. We have collected and analyzed data from Fall 2008 through Winter 2010.

Writing Assessment:

The PH195W Practicum class encompasses off site practicum experience congruent with on campus writing. We measured Improvement in writing abilities during the quarter's 3 diverse assignments by comparing papers over the quarter using a newly created Writing and

Scoring Rubric that gauges 3 components: Content and Organization, Style and Format, and Mechanics. I used several successive reviews to compare the overall assessment and to learn how to achieve similarity among scorers. The first scorers are in-class peer reviewers, the second are independent readers/ graders who comprehensively edit, annotate, and score the papers. I am the third reviewer who additionally judges the accuracy of the previous scoring. So far, the similarity in scoring has been very high, especially after I discussed the development of the writing rubric with the scorers and included their input. It was noted by all readers that students improved both on fulfilling assignment requirements and their ability to reason and write well.

Survey Assessment:

I created an online questionnaire for our seniors to respond to questions regarding their perception of what and how they learned during their transit through our program, in both the public health major in general and the effectiveness of this PH195W course. Quantitative analysis of the questions is placed in Table I, but important findings are:

1. Students saw the value of the Practicum because it develops skills necessary for careers (now 72%, +53% improvement)
2. Students want practicum sites that provide more rigorous training opportunities (now 8%, -38%); we have added more desirable sites for selection
3. Students see the relationship between Practicum and in-class writing in one course (now 72%, +76%); instructors focus more on overtly explaining the relationship between course components
4. Students rank their writing ability at the beginning of course to be very good/good (now 45%, -15%)—students are more realistic now that they don't write as well as they thought

6. Students rank their writing ability at the end of the course to be very good/good (now 97%, +5%) thus students perceive an improvement corroborated by readers
7. Students prefer instructor feedback for writing assistance more than from TAs or in-class assignments (now 65%, +10%); perception issue that faculty are more effective
8. Students think the course is challenging, that they are more prepared for careers (now at 66%, +25%); faculty are providing writing development but also professional ethics, problem solving skills, etc. to help promote career success.
9. A few courses were deemed too easy to not relevant, a few courses identified as too difficult. We are currently assessing these findings, and have already transferred one course from required to elective.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations:

- It is crucial to mentor readers on how to grade, to understand and to utilize the Writing & Scoring rubric, to provide specific target scores (i.e., range and mean). This is particularly valuable since our course format for PH195W has shifted from small 15-student classes to a large lecture of 105 students, three separate 35-student discussion sections, and (this Spring quarter) the use of 13 different readers including myself. The Writing and Scoring Rubric becomes an important sustainable method for preserving comparability between sections and allow us to ensure that we continue to meet our learning objectives established for this course.
- There is the necessity of having the instructor of record maintain oversight, and continually evaluate the scoring of random papers to ensure consistency
- The survey has been very beneficial for gaining insight into students' perception of the PH program and the particular PH195 course. It has help identify courses that do not

reflect the needs of Public Health students, at least in their opinion, and new courses that should be developed. It is an important weathervane to the success of our program.

- We associated points towards a grade with submission of the survey and now obtain nearly a 78 % response rate.

Conclusions:

The mandate for a formal list of learning objectives and an assessment model arrived at the right time for Public Health. As a new program, we needed an impetus to immediately develop faculty-created learning objectives and to ascertain preliminary success of the majors and goals, and curriculum to be able to make modifications before the curriculum was entrenched. We have completed everything we set out to accomplishment. Everything that has been developed is sustainable and will require minimal assistance from the faculty or staff; one faculty member alone is sufficient to maintain this important assessment program.

PUBLIC HEALTH MAJORS PH195W PRACTICUM SURVEY RESULTS
 SURVEY (5 QUARTERS, 13 SECTIONS, 263 STUDENTS)
 W2009-W2010

Category	QUESTION	F08	W09	S09	SS09	F09	W10	CHG W09-W10	COMMENTS
	# Responses/ rate	17/33	17/34	45/74	26-Jul	33/50	37/47=78%		
	No. Instructors/sections	2	2	4	1	3	1		
Majors	PHS or PHS double		65	67	73	61	48	28%	* decreased, not good, > awareness of PH as major
	Changed major at least once		59	62	57	70	56		
	Never changed major		12	9	0	3	14		
	Chose major because fit interests & career goals		71	82	100	88	83		
Curriculum	broad interdisc + strong background PH		100	85	100	93	82	16%	*decreased, not good ???
	Difficulty of PH courses--moderate, about right		76	73	57	70	72		
	Difficulty of PH courses to other disciplines-about the same		35	49	57	64	47		
	somewhat easier		41	33	29	18	31		
Practicum	Value								
	uses university acquired skills on the job		47	53	29	70	72	53%	improved
	somewhat valuable but too many hours		24	9	14	15	19	5%	declined, good
	Concept good, but sites mediocre		29	38	57	15	8	38%	*increased but not good, find more/better sites
	How gained insight as to jobs available								
	own Practicum experience		59	65	57	76	78		
	questions and discussions in class about classmates sites		47	37		55	63		
	Understand why in-class writing & Practicum combined into single course								
	writing useful for most jobs, am on the job now		41	33	67	67	72	76%	*good job of describing import of writing
	course discussed how writing & thinkig used in Practicum and job		24	38	16	30	19		
	No segue between in class writing and Practicum		0	22	0	3	6		
Writing	Instructor provides guidance--Yes		94	96	86	94	86		
	Ability to write well when entering--very good/good		53	62	86	57	45	15%	declined but ook, students more objective
	Ability to write well when leaving--very good/good		92	96	100	97	97	5%	*increased, students gain confidence/ akills
	Most challenging assignment--Grant proposal		53	40	100				
	Review of article					52	58		
	Why sssignment difficult								
	difficut to be creadive					50			
	Never read or thought about this type before--Grant			64	43	50			
	Which assignment taught you the most--Grant proposal				71	82	75		
	methods helped you learn to write better								
	editing and annotations by instructor		59	57	86	67	65	10%	improved, preferred this method of feedback
	assignment description/explain by instructor		41	39	43	42	51		
	editing or annottions by peers		41	5		15	44		
	Overall end-of-the-quarter perception of PH195W								
	course great, challenging, I am more prepared		53	62	33	76	66	25%	* course improving
	course ok, relatively better prepared		31	33	67	24	34		
	course confusing, never understood guideines		12	4	0	0	0		
Learning Outcomes	Understood interdisciplinarity of Public Health--True/mostly true			96	100	97	88	8%	* decline, low sample size
	Understood PH is both a science and an art			95	100	97	97		
	Uderstood basic concepts of Public Health--True.mostly true			91	100	91	94	3%	*improved, better PH foundations
	Gained an ability to analyze & evaluate Ph situations--True.mostly true			86	72	81	85		
	Capable of problem solving--True/mostly true			86	71	90	85		
	Can write a paper with evidence, conclusions, place value--True/mostly true			93	100	94	94		
	decision to major in PH--definite/ think made right choice			92	100	94	95		
Candid Responses	Any courses too easy			PH1, PH2		PH1, PH2	PH1, PH2		*PH1, PH2 are too esy, multiple comments
	Any courses too hard			PH101A,B	PH101A,B	PH101B	PH101A, B		*PH101B too hard; elective now
	Any courses eliminated?			PH1,PH2		PH101B	Nutrition		*PH1.2 students don't like, PH101B too hard
	Any courses added			Global	more	Hlth mgmt	more		****note courses they would like added
				more		Global Hlth	Nutrition		
				env Hlth		same # ea qtr			
						Comm Hlth			
						chronic disease			
						Hlth Disparities			

PH195W PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICUM at UC IRVINE
WRITING COMPONENT SCORING RUBRIC
Shari Stern 2009

Scoring Level	Content and Organization (x2)	Style and Format (x1)	Mechanics (x2)
3 = Exemplary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent paper • Contains explicit premise • States value of work • Assignment requirements followed • Ideas in a logical manner • Numerous new ideas and insights • Paper is particularly interesting and topical. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal style errors occur • Very easy to read and understand. • Models similar scholarly professional writings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses numerous original ideas • Very few errors in spelling, grammar, word usage • Ideas, topics, and evidence flows smoothly • Provides a convincing argument.
2 = Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good paper • Some parts of assignment followed • Premise and value stated and follows from evidence. • Analysis present and moderate understandability, some original ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considerable style and format errors. Documentation fair. • Requires considerable rewrite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some errors in grammar & logic but still understandable. • Transitions between ideas are somewhat effective. • Argument moderately logical
1 = Developing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair paper • Several errors with the requirements • Premise and value are present, but vague. • Analysis is inadequate. • Some original ideas are present • Arguments and ideas are difficult to follow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacks some consistency of style and format. • Documentation incomplete so difficult to determine which ideas are direct quotes and which are paraphrased • Format problematic • Requires significant revision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are many errors in flow and transitions that reduce readability. • Frequent grammatical errors so as to make reading difficult. • Transitions between ideas and paragraphs are ineffectual. • Arguments poorly made

Note:

- 15 points maximum (3x2 + 3x1 + 3x2) = 15 (the points for each assignment is a multiple of 5)
- I have weighted Content & Organization and Mechanics because they are the most important criteria in Science and Public Health