

Common Learning Outcome 1: Think critically and communicate clearly

Hope graduates make critical judgments across differing ways of knowing; discern assumptions and premises; examine and evaluate arguments, generalizations, hypotheses and methods; identify biases and contradictions; assess the validity of conclusions drawn from qualitative and quantitative information and assumptions; and recognize and make appropriate distinctions among aesthetic experiences and responses in clear written and oral communication.

Assessment Tools

Common Learning Outcome 1 assessment uses two assessment tools: the Heighten Critical Thinking Assessment and the National Survey of Student Engagement.

The Heighten Critical Thinking Assessment is a direct, summative assessment of analysis and synthesis using a standardized, benchmarked tool developed by Educational Testing Services.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is an indirect, summative assessment using a standardized, benchmarked tool developed by Indiana University. Outcome 1 assessment uses two Academic Challenge Indicators of the NSSE assessment: Higher Order Learning and Reflective & Integrative Learning.

Assessment Schedule

Results from these assessments are reviewed every two years in the summer of odd years by teams of faculty, staff, and students organized by the Assessment Committee.

The Heighten Critical Thinking Assessment is administered each semester to seniors identified by their academic departments.

The National Survey of Student Engagement is administered each Spring Semester of even years to first-year and senior students.

Assessment Target

Eighty percent of Hope seniors will be proficient or advanced in overall critical thinking on the Heighten Critical Thinking Assessment.

Hope College seniors' mean NSSE score for each item will equal or greater than the aggregate score of Great Lakes Private institutions. Over time, Hope will decrease the gap between the Hope seniors' mean score and that of our Carnegie Class institutions.

Assessment Sample and Process

Assessment sample

Each semester, department chairs provide lists of senior students to participate in the Heighten Critical Thinking Assessment. In some cases, these are students participating in a specific program course, while others are lists of students in their last year or semester. While each academic department participates, they have the latitude to determine how best to identify the students. The Frost Center for Data and Research administers the assessment through invitations and reminders across the semester. The Director of Assessment and Accreditation compiles annual survey results.

Every two years, Hope College participates in the NSSE administration. All enior students are invited to participate through a series of invitations and email reminders administered by Indiana University. Aggregate results, comparison reports, and individual student scores are provided by Indiana University to the Frost Center for Data and Research.

Assessment process

In the summer of each odd year, staff, faculty, and Student Congress representatives participate in the Common Learning Outcome 1 assessment using the results from the above two samples. Compensation for faculty member's assessment work is at the rate approved by the Deans' Council. The Assessment Committee and the Director of Assessment and Accreditation lead the assessment process.

Members of the assessment team receive the report from the previous assessment of Common Learning Outcome 1 and results from the assessments described above. The assessment team convenes for a half-day discussion of the results and develops recommendations for action to improve student learning. They also consider any changes needed in the assessment targets.

The Director of Assessment and Accreditation prepares a summary of the Common Learning Outcome 1 assessment results, discussion, and recommendations. It is approved by the assessment team and provided to the Assessment Committee for review and approval in the Fall Semester of that year.

The Director of Assessment and Accreditation maintains data reports, assessment reports, and other documentation and correspondence related to this assessment within the shared data storage of the Frost Center for Data and Research.

Review of Results

Following their review and approval of the Common Learning Outcome 1 Assessment Report, the Assessment Committee shares the report and recommendations for actions to improve student learning with the Academic Affairs Board and the Deans' Council. The report is made available to the campus community through the Assessment Portal. The Assessment Committee and Director of Assessment and Accreditation are responsible for tracking the actions taken in response to the recommendations.