Guidelines for Creating Action Plans

Action Plan How To’s

1. **Review and Discuss the SLOAR with the Department**
   At the beginning of the semester, the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report (SLOAR) is presented by OPAIR (the SLOAR can be found on MyPGCC and the Academic Affairs Assessment Materials folder on S: Assessment). Review the data with the faculty in the department, running additional reports for more data if needed (check the Review Reports folder in the Academic Affairs Assessment Materials folder on S: Assessment).

2. **Identify a “Problem”**
   From the data, identify an area where students are having difficulty. For example,
   - For rubrics:
     - The SLOAR showed that many students scored poorly on a certain domain in the rubric;
     - The SLOAR showed that many students scored poorly on several domains related to the same course outcome.
   - For multiple-choice assessments:
     - The SLOAR showed that only few of the students scored “proficient” on a certain course outcome;
     - Item analysis showed that many students answered a certain exam question incorrectly;
     - Item analysis showed that many students answered many of the questions related to the same course outcome incorrectly.

   In some cases, there may be more than 1 area that is problematic. It is up to the department to decide what to address, but it is acceptable to focus on just one area, i.e. the most concerning one. During the review process, the job of the Assessment Committee is not to decide what actions should be taken but to insure that the Action Plan contains all of the required fields, relates to the data, and focuses on improving student learning.

3. **Formulate a Goal for the Action Plan**
   The department should decide what they want to achieve with the action plan. This goal must be related to improving an aspect of student learning.

4. **Relate the Action Plan to 1 or more Course Learning Outcomes**
   The department should decide which course outcome(s) will be impacted by the action plan.

5. **Describe the Strategy to Improve**
   The department should describe which changes will be made to the course to improve student learning. This strategy should relate to either learning/teaching or the assessment tool. Please see the examples below. If the Action Plan proposes to either increase or decrease expectations/level of difficulty of a course, is the proposed action appropriate, based on the course outcomes and the problem that is identified? In some circumstances, increasing or reducing the expectations/level of
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difficulty of a course can be acceptable. The department must show that this course of action is justified, given the course outcomes and the nature of the problem that is identified.

- For rubrics:
  - More teaching time will be spent on topic X to deepen students’ understanding. In addition to extra reading materials, several practice opportunities will be given in the classroom
  - Part of the assignment directions will be rewritten to make it clearer to students what is expected of them
  - One of the rubric rows will be rewritten to measure student learning more accurately
- For Multiple Choice Assessments:
  - One or more questions will be rewritten to be less ambiguous
  - More teaching time will be spent on topic X to deepen students’ understanding. In addition to extra reading materials, several practice opportunities will be given in the classroom

6. Formulate an Expected Outcome
The department should formulate a statement, hypothesizing what they think will be the outcome of the action plan, i.e. what difference they expect to see in the next SLOAR as a result of the actions that they have taken. In attempting to estimate a percentage of increase in performance, outcomes should not be below 10%. Typically, a 5% variation will happen with different groups of students from semester-to-semester. An increase of 10% or more is a clear indication of positive change.

Action Plan Example

Name of person submitting action plan: Bridget Brennan
Department: EGL
Course: EGL-1000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Problem:</th>
<th>In Spring 2012, each student’s final paper in EGL-1000 was evaluated using a common rubric. Eighty percent of the students scored in the “below average” or “unacceptable” range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal of the Action Plan:</td>
<td>Improve students’ thesis statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Outcome(s) being addressed (number and text)</td>
<td>Course Outcome 1: Write thesis statements that accurately present the essay’s main idea, are focused, and are grammatically sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of strategy to improve:</td>
<td>In discussions with faculty it was clear that not all faculty agreed on how to apply the rubric to some papers. Thus, the rubric will be modified by adding additional descriptors to help ensure graders are consistently evaluating each thesis statement. Additionally, faculty will be incorporating one of three activities into the class. Each activity involves engaging students... (maybe 2-3 sentences about the change in the...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected Outcome:</td>
<td>50% of students will score in the average or higher range in Spring 2013 on the thesis statement portion of the rubric</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Save and Name the Action Plan
To maintain consistency, all Action Plans should be saved using the following file name template:

Course_Action Plan_Semester & Year

First, list the course name and number. Next, indicate the type of document by including, “Action Plan.” Finally, for the date, include the semester and year that the course will be reassessed, as opposed to the current semester and year.

Example:

EGL1010_Action Plan_FA15
1. **Do we have to create an action plan for every course we assess?**
   No.

2. **How many action plans does each department have to submit per semester?**
   If your department’s program offerings encompass a single discipline—for example, the English department only offers programs related to English—you will submit **one** action plan addressing one of the courses you assessed in the previous semester.
   If your department’s program offerings encompass multiple disciplines—e.g., the Physical Science and Engineering Department offers a program in chemistry and a program in engineering—you will submit multiple action plans (see below for more details).

3. **How many disciplines are in my department?**
   The following lists the disciplines covered by each department:

   - **Health Sciences**
     a) Allied Health: PMD, HIM, NUM, RST, and RAD
     b) Health, Nutrition & Physical Education: PED, NTR, and HLE
     c) Nursing: NUR

   - **Learning Foundations**
     a) Developmental Math: DVM
     b) Developmental Reading/English: DVR and DVE

   - **Liberal Arts**
     1. Art, Philosophy, and Music: Art, MUS, PHL
     2. Communication & Theater: COM and THE
     3. Language Studies: ESL and Foreign Language
     4. History: AFA, International Studies, Women’s Studies
     5. English: EGL

   - **Social Science and Business**
     a) Business Studies: ECN, ACC, BMT, and BMK
     b) Hospitality, Tourism, & Culinary Arts: HSM and CUL
     c) Psychological and Sociological Sciences: PSY, SOC, and HUS
     d) Public Safety and Law: CJT, COR, FOS, and PAR
     e) Teacher Education: TED

   - **STEM**
     a) INT: IET & ENT
     b) Math: MATH
     c) Biology: BIO and Environmental Studies
     d) Chemistry: CHM & EN
4. **If my department encompasses multiple disciplines, exactly how many action plans will we have to submit each semester?**

The number may vary by semester, as it will depend on how many disciplines you assessed in the previous semester. **Generally speaking, you will submit 1 action plan for each discipline, per semester.**

**Example:**
- The Physical Sciences and Engineering (PSE) Department has two disciplines: chemistry and engineering.
- Let’s say that in Spring 2012, they assessed two separate courses, one for each discipline—Engineering 1010 for engineering and CHEM 2010 for chemistry. In the following semester, they would submit one action plan per discipline—one for Engineering 1010 and one for Chemistry 1010.

However, there may be semesters when you will submit fewer than one action plan per discipline.

**Example:**
- If Chemistry 1010 is a requirement for both the Chemistry Program and the Engineering Program, CHEM 1010 may appear in the same semester on both the chemistry four-year cycle and the engineering four-year cycle (e.g., Spring 2013). In this case, they would only submit one action plan in Fall 2013 because the single course is “covering” both disciplines.
- Likewise, if in Spring 2013, the department used CHEM 2010 to assess the chemistry program and the engineering program had no courses slated for initial assessment in Spring 2013, they would only submit one action plan in Fall 2013.

5. **If my department assessed more than one course per discipline (e.g., ART 1010 and ART 1570), how do we determine which course will be reassessed (and will, consequently, need an action plan)?**

Take the following steps:
- Review the data from the previous semester, which is presented in the SLOAR report. Data for the fall semester will be provided at the beginning of the following spring. Data from the spring semester will be provided at the beginning of the following fall.
- Based on the data you received, your department should collectively decide which course in each discipline is in most need of reassessment.
- Within your department, decide how best to address areas of concern for the chosen course(s).
- Using the action plan form, create an action plan for your chosen course that addresses the areas of concern. Make sure your action plan focuses on improving student learning for one or more course outcomes.
6. **The SLOAR data shows all (or almost all) students scored “excellent” or “proficient” for all learning outcomes. What should we do for the action plan?**
   In the event that all students scored excellent or proficient, the department should take a look at the assessment measure and discuss if the assignment needs to be more challenging for students.

7. **What is the timetable for creating and submitting the action plan and reassessing?**
   You will submit an action plan for each chosen course in the semester after the initial assessment.
   **Example:**
   - Fall 2012: initial course assessment
   - March 2013 (Spring 2013 semester): action plan is submitted
   - Spring 2013: necessary changes are made to the course and/or the assessment instruments.
   - Beginning of Fall 2013: a finalized version of the assignment and assessment measure (multiple-choice key and alignment or rubric) are submitted.
   - Fall 2013: class is reassessed.
Action Plan Template

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Department:
Course:

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