Closing the Loop:

How an information literacy assessment plan contributes to first-year student success at UT Austin

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Immersion: Assessment Track

I arrived with:

- a large amount of unorganized data
- an unfinished draft of an assessment plan
- questions about how to assess a program with widely varied courses and outcomes

While I was there, I:

- connected with colleagues who had similar challenges
- had time to deeply reflect on possible solutions
- heard ideas for new approaches from mentors who had tried them

I left with:

- possible approaches to share with my team back home
- a network of librarians interested in assessment
- renewed enthusiasm
- a less-unfinished draft of an assessment plan

And then the real work began...

Putting the plan into action

Step 1: Regroup with colleagues in my unit

Assessment is not solitary work. I needed to come back home to my team to finish the work I started at Immersion. In the months after my return, we:

- Held regular meetings to discuss various aspects of the plan.
- Created several iterations of the plan and made numerous edits.
- Created a schedule of continuing assessment to drive our work going forward.

Step 2: Share with library colleagues

The plan I drafted during Immersion encompasses the work done by my unit, Library Instruction Services. When we finished the plan, we wanted to share it broadly within the library. We:

- Emailed the plan to all library staff members.
- Hosted a presentation of the plan for any interested staff members.
- Will consult with anyone interested in creating a learning outcomes assessment plan.

Step 3: Share with colleagues outside the library

I am a member of a campus-wide network of assessment professionals. Having gone through the process of writing an assessment plan allows me to:

- Showcase the library as a space for teaching and learning.
- Show colleagues across campus that we practice thoughtful assessment.
- Provide data that illustrate our impact.
- Identify opportunities for partnerships in assessment and research.

How has the assessment plan affected our practice?

Framework to use diverse kinds of data to assess a single program

In the past, we gave short pre– and post-tests to each class we taught, but weren't happy with this approach. At Immersion, I learned that it is possible to aggregate assessments of individual classes and activities to get a picture of how specific learning outcomes are met within the program as a whole. This approach frees us up to conduct more course– or session-integrated assessments that draw out areas we can improve.

Examples

- Use of "Source Analysis Worksheets" as formative assessment tools highlighted the need to teach evaluation as more of a mindset or process than a checklist.
- We are in the process of developing rubrics that can be used to assess student work in Google Forms generated during in-class activities. This will comprise a large portion of our programmatic assessment.
- Each librarian is committed to using at least 2 course– or session-integrated assessment methods each semester. We meet twice a year to discuss what we did and what we learned.

Targeted discussions with data

- Using the plan to drive discussion in our annual retreat kept our decisions tied to the data, and added depth to our reflections

Example

Pre– and post-testing first-year students showed that our teaching was not making a big difference in students' ability to choose relevant keywords. In the fall, we will trial and assess new approaches to teaching this skill to see what works. Broad pre– and post-testing once a year helps us decide what to focus on, and other methods help us determine what works in the classroom.

Freedom not to assess everything

- Our plan dictates that we heavily assess efforts that are most essential to our goals (course-integrated teaching and working with faculty), and collect less data on other work (like social media and drop-in classes).
- We will annually review the plan to make sure that our data-collection focus aligns with our current focus in practice.

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