Chapter 8
Standards 12 and 14: Assessment of Student Learning and General Education

Standard 12: General Education
"*The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency*" (*Characteristics of Excellence* 47).

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning
"*Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals"* (*Characteristics of Excellence* 63).

Introductory Overview of Standards 12 and 14

LaGuardia Community College's primary mechanism for conducting student outcomes assessment is the Periodic Program Review (PPR). As mandated by CUNY, approximately every five years each program undergoes a PPR. This review includes an analysis of student learning, course assessment, program assessment, and assessment of both programmatic and selected general education competencies. In 2001-02, the College's governance bodies approved a new Outcomes Assessment Plan to enhance the existing PPR process. While PPRs were retained, the new plan increased focus on collecting and assessing direct evidence of student learning via evaluation of work collected in their ePortfolios (14.7.01 Outcomes Assessment Plan).

The Outcomes Assessment Plan strengthened general education by instituting the seven core competencies required in the curriculum at key benchmark points, thus ensuring that **the College's program of general education is of sufficient scope to enhance students' intellectual growth** (FE 12.1), as expected by Middle States. (Sentences and phrases that have been bolded have been taken directly from *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*.) The plan's emphasis on core competencies and ePortfolios emerged from three fundamental goals: to improve student learning; to define common outcomes across all programs; and to look systematically at actual student work so as to measure learning and development beyond graduation rates and standardized tests. Using ePortfolios for assessment enables the College to capture "a rich, longitudinal picture of student development and learning through systematic examination of student work" (12.3.06 Reclaiming the Public University). All programs include designated "ePortfolio courses" where student work is placed into ePortfolios: "basic skills and introductory courses to capture baseline data; the urban studies course (a requirement in all majors) as a mid-point; and a capstone course as the end-point." These digital collections are used to assess student mastery of both programmatic and general education competencies. Faculty conducting program reviews can thus draw on "a record of student learning from the first semester through graduation. Assessing an actual body of student work against the faculty-developed rubrics for each core competency tells a program whether or not students are achieving the required levels and if not, where improvement is needed." (12.3.06 Reclaiming the Public University).

LaGuardia's work on assessment has changed substantially over the last ten years from the incorporation of general education core competencies, the creation of rubrics, and the

implementation of ePortfolios, to a systematized, periodic review of authentic student work in the core and programmatic competencies that is used to inform curricular changes in our programs and majors. The years 2001 to 2005 made up the foundational period during which the College crafted the key elements of its assessment plan. In these years, LaGuardia first piloted ePortfolio, developed rubrics around the core competencies, began helping faculty consider how the core competencies factored into their courses as part of the professional development work, established a vocabulary around assessment, and created its vision of assessment. Since 2007, the College has focused on increasing institutional support for assessment. The evolution of these systems is illustrated in Appendix 8.1.

Additionally, LaGuardia has established itself as a national leader on assessment by sharing its assessment and ePortfolio work at conferences, serving as a case study for national assessment efforts, and providing leadership for such organizations as AAC&U and CHEA. Appendix 8.2 provides more details of LaGuardia's leadership work on assessment.

Since 2003, in many programs such as nursing, physical therapy, and fine arts, LaGuardia students have begun developing longitudinal, "integrative" ePortfolios, working in multiple courses across semesters and disciplines. They collect their work and reflect on their learning, creating narratives that connect academic content to lived experience. Reviewing their growth, students link their work to General Education and programmatic competencies. Thousands of students share ePortfolios with their families, potential employers and transfer institutions. In 2009-10, more than 12,000 LaGuardia students were active in their portfolios. LaGuardia's work with ePortfolio is guided by pedagogical practices that support integrative learning and help students make connections among courses and develop new identities as learners.

In this chapter, we treat Standards 12 and 14 together because assessment of student learning is closely integrated into LaGuardia's approach to general education. Under Standard 12, we examined how the College developed its general education core competencies, how these competencies are integrated into the curriculum, how the College ensures that students are proficient in these competencies, how the goals of general education are communicated to students, and how the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives is incorporated into the curriculum. Under Standard 14, we investigated how the College measures student achievement of core and programmatic competencies, how effectively the college communicates each program's learning objectives and the College's core competencies, how the ePortfolio process facilitates outcomes assessment, how student assessment information is shared with appropriate constituencies, how faculty are involved in the outcomes assessment process, including closing the loop, and how academic assessment affects curriculum development and revision, pedagogical strategies, and student learning. Addressing two fundamental elements listed under Standard 11, we also examined how student learning outcomes are incorporated into program goals and course syllabi.

Findings for Standards 12 and 14

Overview of LaGuardia's Assessment Plan

1. *What do we expect our students to learn?* Our research confirmed that the plan has **clearly articulated statements of expected learning outcomes at the institutional, program, and course level** (FE 14.1).

Institutional General Education Core Competencies. We found that **the College's requirements assure that, upon degree completion, students are proficient in oral and written communication, quantitative reasoning, and technological competency** (FE 12.4). General education goals are assessed by seven core competencies (14.7.02 General Education Core Competencies): Critical Literacy (a comprehensive category for three competencies: reading, writing, and critical thinking), Quantitative Reasoning, Oral Communication, Technological Literacy, and Research and Information Literacy.

Programmatic Competencies. We also determined that **each program at the College establishes programmatic competencies with discipline-specific learning goals and outcomes** (FE 11.3) (14.7.06 Program Competencies).

Course Competencies. Finally, we established that **the official syllabus for every course in all degree programs lists student learning objectives** (FE 11.12).

2. *How do we know they are learning it?* The plan constitutes a **documented, organized and sustained assessment process** (FE 14.2) designed to examine institutional effectiveness in terms of learning and teaching and **provides sufficient, convincing evidence** (FE 14.3) of the degree to which students are achieving learning outcomes.

3. *How are assessment results used to improve teaching and learning?* LaGuardia's assessment process "closes the assessment loop" by **sharing data with appropriate constituents and using that data to improve our pedagogies and academic programs** (FE 14.4). In line with our commitment to the academic, career, and personal growth and development of every student, the assessment process uses a variety of tools to evaluate the effectiveness of learning and teaching.

1. **Clearly Articulated Learning Outcomes: What do we expect our students to learn?**

We found that **General Education Core Competencies are required of all students across all majors and are the collective responsibility of the entire faculty** (FE 12.2). After the core competencies were adopted in 2001, faculty teams developed standardized rubrics for assessing them. The core competency descriptions and rubrics are available to the entire college on the Assessment website (14.7.03 Core Competency Rubrics: critical literacy, oral communication, research/info literacy, quantitative).

The College's seven general education competencies do not explicitly address the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives. Instead, **LaGuardia incorporates the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives into each degree program** (FE 12.3) through individual courses in each major and the Urban Studies requirement. The Standard 12 working group found that the curricula for every degree program has at least one required course that addresses these issues (see Appendix 8.3). The curriculum also incorporates values, ethics, and diverse perspectives through the Urban Studies program. Since its founding, the College has required an Urban Studies course for every degree candidate (09.2.68 College Catalog-2011-12, p. 172). In spring 2009, 1,478 students were enrolled in 64 sections of Urban Studies courses (12.4.01 Urban Studies Task Force Report). Urban Studies courses can be offered on any subject by any department as long as they focuses on the dynamics of an urban environment and students participate in two out-of-classroom experiences that use the city as a research laboratory (12.4.02 Urban Studies Program Review). Since these courses often examine social interactions among

different cultural and ethnic groups, their curriculum encompasses a range of issues related to values and diversity.

Thus, even though the College's seven general education competencies do not explicitly address values, ethics, or diverse perspectives, the curriculum is designed so that all LaGuardia students engage in a study of these issues. This is corroborated by results from the 2010 CCSSE, in which LaGuardia scored above the national mean on questions dealing with values and diversity (see Appendix 8.3).

A central feature of LaGuardia's assessment plan is that the required core competencies are advanced and assessed across all disciplines at several points in a student's academic career, thus emphasizing the interdisciplinary development of key academic skills.

In collaboration with faculty, Program Directors have developed Core Competency Grids for all programs that identify the courses in each major where core competencies are reinforced, and where faculty require students to upload relevant work into the ePortfolio Assessment Database for purposes of outcomes assessment (14.7.04 General Education Competency Grids).

These grids appear on the College's Assessment Website and represent a **clear statement of student learning outcomes** (FE 14.1) showing how the general education core competencies integrate into each program's curriculum. Below is a sample grid for the Education Associate: The Bilingual Child Major. All grids can be accessed at 14.7.04 General Education Competency Grids. The sample grid illustrates how the assessment of the competencies provides a developmental look at student skill achievement. Critical literacy assessment begins in developmental writing (ENG099) and/or freshman composition (ENG101), occurs again at a midpoint in study in the major (ELN101, the Urban Studies writing intensive course), and at the capstone level (ELE203).

Figure 8.3

2008-09 General Education Competency Grid
AA –Education Associate: The Bilingual Child

	Baseline	ELL 101	ELS 200	ELS 201	ELS 204	ELS 210	ELN 120 (Urban Studies)	ELN 101 (Urban Studies)	CPB 011	ELE 203 (Capstone)
Critical Literacy (Writing Intensive)[1]	ENG099/ENG 101/ESL					X		X		X
Quantitative Reasoning[2]	MAT096				X		X			
Oral Communication[3]	CPA 011								X	
Research and Information Literacy	ENG101									X
Technological Literacy										Capstone ePortfolio

*Students select one course

[1]Two courses to deposit in ePortfolio assessment area: Urban Studies and one to be selected in the discipline (both are WI courses)
[2]Two courses to deposit in ePortfolio assessment area: MAT096 and one to be selected in the discipline (May be done as part of Research & Information Literacy competency)
[3]Two courses to deposit in ePortfolio assessment area: CEP121 and one to be selected in the discipline (if CEP 121 not required, select two in discipline)

We also determined that **Programmatic Competencies, specific to the discipline, are specified, addressed, and assessed by the faculty teaching in each program** (FE 14.1). To

ensure that these competencies are **consonant with the standards of higher education and the relevant discipline** (FE 14.1), wherever appropriate, programmatic competencies reflect accrediting bodies or national standards (14.7.05 National Accreditations). The assessment of programmatic competencies is a central feature of the plan and builds on assessment conducted through the PPR process. Programmatic competencies for each major are publically available on the College's assessment website (14.7.06 Program Competencies). Some programs have created websites explaining the programmatic competencies so that students understand assessment (see screenshot).

In a faculty-driven assessment process, the relationship between programmatic and core competencies is key. The Physical Therapist Assistant Program, for instance, has established clear relationships among the competencies, student work, and assessment in a way that is properly sequenced and builds across the entire curriculum. Other Allied Health programs, along with Business programs, have also made progress in this regard (for details, see Appendix 8.4 and 14.7.20 SOTL PT Presentation). The College needs to continue to work with programs to improve the way they use the core competencies in concert with programmatic competencies. For instance, as students master the research core competency, they should simultaneously be mastering programmatic competencies defined within the program's disciplinary area.

Course competencies are required in each course (FE 14.1) and are the responsibility of individual faculty teaching and assessing the course. Since the 1970s the College Curriculum Committee and College Senate have required that **all official course syllabi list specific student learning objectives** (FE 11.12); there are no exceptions to this policy. A course cannot begin the process of college-wide approval without student learning outcomes. The College-wide Curriculum Committee has a SharePoint site containing electronic versions of all course proposals since 2007 with proposing departments having paper copies prior to 2007. See Appendix 8.5 for a course proposal indicating learning objectives, as well as an example showing how the English Department ensures that students receive a common set of course goals across multiple sections of a course. The College is currently in the process of posting student learning objectives for each course online, as part of the web-based course listings on the college website, which will provide students with access to a comprehensive archive of learning objectives for all courses. (See instructions for logging in to the Curriculum Committee SharePoint site and accessing the online course listings.)

2. **An Organized and Sustained Assessment Process: How do we know students are learning what we expect them to learn?**

The Assessment Leadership Team (ALT) includes representation from faculty, administration, and the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), and meets bi-weekly, demonstrating the **support and collaboration of faculty and administration** (FE 14.2). This team guides and communicates the College's assessment work, trains faculty on the College's Assessment Rubrics, liaises with the CTL, and advises on the selection and adaptation of a new ePortfolio system to support the assessment process. The ALT also guides departments through their PPRs by providing outside readers for core competency readings. Each spring the team reviews the year's progress and creates a work plan and goals for the next year.

Since 2007 PPRs have included readings of student work from the ePortfolio assessment area. Faculty and staff conducting PPRs have evaluated student work against programmatic and core

competencies, as appropriate. Embedded in PPRs are evaluations of student work, reports on student progress in core competencies, and recommendations for program improvement.

The core competencies, rubrics, and the process of assessment were the focus of several Instructional Staff meetings (held once every semester for full-time faculty and other instructional staff), including sessions at which faculty worked with the rubrics. The Academic Dean and the Director of Outcomes Assessment visited each department on several occasions to outline the assessment plan, explain the rubrics, and describe the artifact collection processes. This departmental approach has been replaced by regular semester meetings with all Program Directors who are then asked to report back to their departments. This new approach has been a concerted effort to engage and educate large numbers of faculty who are not members of the Assessment Leadership and Rubric Development teams, allowing the development of and inclusion of rubrics in the PPR process.

Initially, most programs chose to use the Critical Literacy rubric and evaluate only that competency in their PPRs using the College's rubric. In part due to the College's widespread professional development of WID courses, most faculty were comfortable discussing the role of writing, critical thinking, and reading in student work. Over time, the integration of other competencies has become more common. Some programs have also used the Oral Communications rubric and the Quantitative Literacy rubric. As our assessment plan becomes more robust, these readings and data are increasingly reflected in the PPR reports. The growth of outcomes assessment at LaGuardia has been incremental but persistent and intentional, building on its strengths and successes. For example, the recent 2011 PPR for Liberal Arts included a reading on all of the core competencies for the first time. By asking faculty to look at student work in all competency areas, not just selected areas, the Liberal Arts PPR serves as a model for future PPRs (14.1.12 Liberal Arts PPR).

Although there has been steady progress in understanding and using the college-wide rubrics, as well as their relationship to programmatic competencies, this process has not progressed as quickly as desired. Accordingly, the 2011 college-wide Benchmark Assessment Readings (described below) on all seven of the core competencies represents a concentrated effort to push this process along more quickly and to engage the faculty in considerations of all seven core competencies.

Assessing the Degree to Which Students are Learning General Education Core Competencies: Three Case Studies and Benchmark Readings:

Our research confirmed that **the College assesses general education outcomes within its overall plan for assessing student learning, and that these assessment results are utilized for curricular improvement** (FE 12.6). From 2007 to the present, LaGuardia has made significant gains in reading student work against the core competency rubrics. This is a significant change from the previously established PPR assessment process that read work only against programmatic competencies. Now, all PPR readings involve a review of student work for both sets of competencies. Appendix 8.6 reviews three case studies that demonstrate how LaGuardia has progressed quickly from the large-scale collection of student work to including the assessment of this work within the PPR process. Over the course of four years, the college has moved from reading student work for PPRs in one competency area with 32 pieces of student work to reading in six areas with 418 pieces of work. These assessments are a rich source of data

about the College's approach to general education; they also point out significant areas where the College needs to address gaps revealed by the Benchmark Readings and reflected in the PPR recommendations. The College should assist programs to close the assessment feedback loop by providing support through such incentives as the CTL mini-grant projects, especially where large numbers of artifacts could not be scored, indicating a lack of consonance between assignments and rubrics.

Benchmark Assessment of General Education Core Competencies

To assess general education core competencies, LaGuardia has instituted twice-yearly Benchmark Assessment Readings to augment the findings from PPRs and create additional **direct evidence of student learning** (FE 14.2) on a yearly basis. These new readings ensure that we are using **student learning assessment information as part of institutional assessment** (FE 14.5) beyond the PPR process. This new process occurred for the first time in January and June 2011. Twenty-nine faculty from 13 different areas were formed into interdisciplinary teams to read student artifacts across six core competencies: critical thinking, writing, and reading (critical literacy); quantitative literacy; research and information literacy; and oral communication. The readings encompassed beginning and capstone level work, looking at students' progress throughout the curriculum. The study compared the work of students with 25 and fewer credits with student work deposited at 45 credits or more to evaluate student progress through the curriculum and to measure core competency skill gains.

Each competency-specific team was trained on its rubric and then read materials deposited into the assessment segment of student ePortfolios. Teams received extensive training through discussion, norming, and practice scoring (14.7.13 Benchmark Assessment Reading Training Materials, January-February 2011. Hard copy in document room only). Teams scored 3,087 live samples. Each team scored samples from both credit categories to assess student progress through the core competencies. Each artifact was scored on a 1-6 scale by two readers, yielding a combined score for each student ranging from 2-12. Ideally, students at or near completion of their academic careers at the college should receive a score of 10 (a 5 from each of the two readers).

Benchmark Assessment Findings

As a result of this process, LaGuardia now has an overall "snapshot" of student learning outcomes in general education competencies across all majors in the institution. This is a significant accomplishment, particularly when contrasted with survey results reported this year by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) showing that "most assessment approaches were used at the departmental or individual unit level. Few respondents reported using these approaches with samples to represent the entire institution" (14.4.01 Learning Outcomes Assessment in Community Colleges). LaGuardia's work in this regard has resulted in the College being selected by the Community College Futures Assembly as a finalist for the 2012 Bellwether Award in Instructional Programs and Services.

Overall, the results showed that students are making progress (an average increase across all rubrics of .87), though the College should strive to improve scores for students with over 45 credits so that on average they reached a score of 10. The results are summarized in Figure 8.4.

A complete discussion of the findings can be found in 14.7.16 Benchmark Assessment Report and Appendix 8.7.

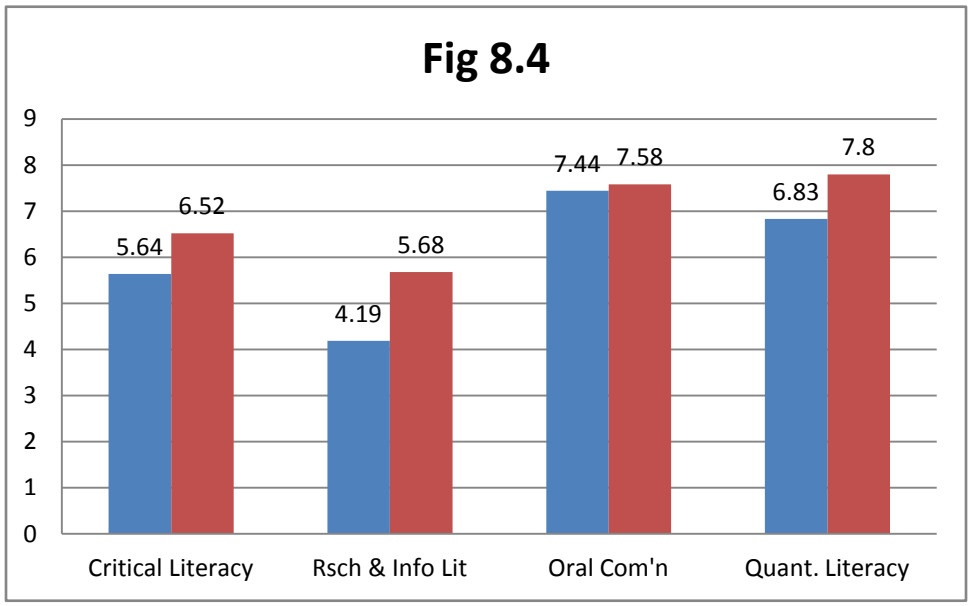


Figure 8.4

Critical Literacy (Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing). The 1,072 samples demonstrated a gain of 0.88 across the curriculum between lower and higher credit students.

Oral Communication. The 875 samples demonstrated a gain of only 0.14 across the curriculum between lower and higher credit students. Unfortunately, 39% of the samples were not related to the rubric. Samples exhibited a wide range of quality and other technological limitations.

Quantitative Reasoning. These 322 samples demonstrated a gain of 0.97 on a 12-point scale across the curriculum between lower and higher credit students. The interdisciplinary scoring team found that 30% of the samples were not related to the rubric, largely because the rubric was too narrow to encompass the range of assignments from courses across the curriculum.

Research and Information Literacy. These 318 samples demonstrated a gain of 1.49 across the curriculum between lower and higher credit students. In this category, the interdisciplinary scoring team found that programmatic definitions and practices around citation of researched information varied widely, making it difficult to consistently score for plagiarism.

Technological Literacy. This competency does not have a rubric. When the College's assessment plan was originally conceived ten years ago, much of the national conversation focused on the digital divide and basic technology skills. Today, the conversation has shifted to a higher level of skill. In the coming year, the College will undertake a reconsideration of technological literacy as part of its assessment plan. We will explore if Technological Literacy is still a key competency for our students or if we should move toward new competencies like Integrative Learning.

Benchmark Assessment Recommendations

Faculty reading teams made a number of recommendations based on the Benchmark Readings. After being reviewed by the Standard 14 working group, the following recommendations were immediately implemented in March 2011.

- Benchmark Assessment readings should become a regular part of the LaGuardia assessment process twice a year (in January and June), using faculty volunteers who are paid a small stipend. The College should rotate teams and volunteers to widen understanding of the assessment process.
- Additional educational efforts—through program directors and department meetings—need to emphasize the relationship between the rubrics and the assessment scores.
- A clear work plan and calendar of responsibilities between LaGuardia and the vendor of the new ePortfolio system, Digication, needs to be created.
- Based on the ease of the system use and irregular reader speed, a modified schedule of readings should be created that will allow faculty to read at home or in their offices at their own speed once norming and training have been completed.

Assessing the Degree to Which Students are Learning Programmatic Competencies

Our research determined that **the College assesses student learning and program outcomes relative to the goals of the undergraduate programs and uses the results to improve student learning and program effectiveness** (FE 11.13). While programs have always had programmatic competencies, they were in various formats, not always easily located; some were well-articulated, others were implicit. Programs were therefore asked to systematically articulate (and revise if needed) their programmatic competencies and how they mapped to the curriculum, spell out the assessment methods and criteria for each (with illustrative examples of student work), and collect related data more routinely. This information, initially collected in binder form, is currently in the process of being converted to a Programmatic Competency Institutional ePortfolio to allow for greater accessibility for faculty within programs. (See instructions for logging into Digication for access to 14.7.07 Programmatic Competencies ePortfolio for materials currently available in digital form).

Beginning in 2010, each program thus began programmatic data collection more routinely each semester, identifying an initial set of data they wanted to collect. Data are collected throughout the academic year at the end of each semester in fall I, fall II, spring I, and spring II. Each program collects data in accordance with student learning outcomes for courses in the major. Not all courses run each semester, so each program provides data for the courses that run in that particular term. LaGuardia is in the second year of this routinized data collection; the goal is to create a continuous data stream, providing programs with a much stronger data set available when they come up for a PPR (rather than having to scramble to collect outcomes data just before the PPR commences).

It should be noted that ePortfolio-based assessment for programmatic competencies is not nearly as advanced as it is for the core competencies, as to date the College has put greater emphasis on using ePortfolio to assess its across-the-curriculum approach to general education. With assessment of general education core competencies now firmly in place, the use of ePortfolio for programmatic competency assessment will increase. In the meantime, programs have been

encouraged to place greater emphasis on tangible examples of student learning, which are now being collected in the Programmatic Competency Institutional ePortfolio (see Digication login instructions); these completed tests, assignments, projects, etc. are **direct evidence of student learning** (FE 14.2). To transform grades from indirect evidence to direct evidence, programs are now being asked to place clear evaluation criteria for grades into the Programmatic Competency Institutional ePortfolio; this is currently in progress, though much work remains as many programs still do not have evaluation criteria clearly spelled out for all their programmatic competencies.

For example, the Paralegal Studies Program reported that it would "Enable the student to write proper English. To write with the clarity, accuracy and organization expected of a paralegal." To assess this, the program looked at grade distribution reports for Introduction to Paralegal Studies (BTP 101) and Legal Research and Writing (BTP 204) (the courses that emphasize this competency) to see how many students achieved a benchmark of 73% (2.0 or C): in BTP 101, 51.8% of students achieved this or higher, and in BTP 204, 88% of students achieved this or higher. Now that programs have taken the large step of routinely collecting and reporting this kind of data, assessment methodologies such as this will need to be refined and revised to strengthen the consistent use of direct assessment measures and to implement targeted revisions based on the data. For example, collecting data like "80% of the students will achieve a passing final grade" would be more useful if accompanied by published criteria (such as a rubric) showing how students are doing on the specific learning objectives that comprise the grade, thus indicating areas that students are weak on that would benefit from curricular or pedagogical changes. This is the direction that the Assessment Leadership Team is now guiding program faculty.

Assessing What Students Are Learning: The Role and Evolution of the ePortfolio Assessment Database

The Center for Teaching and Learning has provided key support for the collection of data in the ePortfolio Assessment Database since 2004. The CTL's leadership has guided a substantial **investment of institutional resources** (FE 14.2) through grant writing and management of institutional resources. Faculty development on the use of ePortfolio to enhance learning has also supported outcomes assessment. Hundreds of faculty have become familiar with ePortfolio through CTL programs, including seminars exploring advances in assessment such as the ePortfolio in the Professions seminar (2006-09).

LaGuardia's ePortfolio system is unique in that it combines an assessment tool with a pedagogical tool. Faculty and students regularly use ePortfolio as a course element to post work, compose online, and feature multimodal endeavors. The focus on competencies, combined with the reflective and expressive elements of the ePortfolio, builds student engagement and improves student outcomes. ePortfolios and ePortfolio assignments are created and graded by faculty. At the same time, the ePortfolio system works as an assessment tool, allowing the College to collect student artifacts for assessment against programmatic and core competencies. Students enrolled in benchmark courses deposit their work into the ePortfolio Assessment Database. This student work is the basis for the College's **direct evidence of student learning** (FE 14.2).

The ease of ePortfolio use has recently taken a major leap forward in fall 2010 with the new Digication ePortfolio system. Digication allows the College to create assessment groups

composed of faculty from the same or different departments to read and score student work online. This work appears digitally along with the scoring mechanism connected to the rubric for the core competency (and eventually the programmatic competencies). The College's investment in a new system was in response to faculty requirements for a better ePortfolio to support teaching, learning, and assessment. This significant shift of resources demonstrates a substantial **investment of institutional resources and support and collaboration of faculty and administration** (FE 14.2).

Since September 2003, 40,255 artifacts have been deposited in the system. As shown in Appendix 8.8, the College has experienced exponential growth in depositing concomitant with the increasing college-wide emphasis on systematic collection of assessment data. While in 2007-08, 3,465 artifacts were collected, in 2010-11, this had grown to 21,226. Widespread depositing in all programs and majors provides sufficient artifacts to run longitudinal and historical studies of student data. Artifacts can also be sampled from current or past semesters depending on the objectives of different studies. However, in part because of the recent emphasis on depositing in programs and majors, the college has not emphasized the collection of baseline data. When preparing the Benchmark Assessment Readings, the team discovered that we did not have a sufficient sample size to draw from at under 12 credits. Accordingly, the ALT determined that using 25 credits as the initial starting point would yield a larger sample size. This is a significant deficiency in our current structure because the college's assessment plan depends on the careful collection of longitudinal data.

Continuing Development and Communication of the College's Assessment Plan

As the Assessment Leadership Team has guided assessment at the College, it has also worked to raise awareness about assessment college-wide. Doing so acknowledges productive assessment work being done by faculty and helps foster a culture of assessment at the College (14.7.19 SOTL Business Presentation, 14.7.20 SOTL PT Presentation). To make the process more explicit for students and faculty, the ALT developed an Outcomes Assessment website that provides a transparent source of information about LaGuardia's approach to assessment, the PPR process, and the general education competencies and rubrics (14.7.12 Assessment Website). Since 2007, the ALT has been modifying the original Assessment Plan so that it is more faculty and student friendly and works to both assess student work and provide feedback to departments about their programs and student core competency progress. Beginning in 2011, the ALT has begun to disseminate the results of the Benchmark Assessment readings to the college community with a further plan to provide individual results to each program/major in future reporting. The College has sought to engage in continued **evaluation of the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the student learning assessment process** (FE 14.2) to ensure that the program evolves with the college's incremental expertise in using assessment of student learning to inform the classroom, our programs, and the institution as a whole. Changes in the college's Assessment Plan also seek to ensure that the plan has **sufficient simplicity, detail, and ownership to be sustainable** (FE 14.2). The overall cycle is illustrated in Appendix 8.9.

In fall 2009, the ALT harnessed the power of the Program Directors to function as assessment liaisons for their departments, ensuring that the work of assessment is faculty-driven, focused on the goals and outcomes of programs and majors, and regularly reported and discussed in department meetings. Program Directors were charged with identifying courses and the types of

assignments most appropriate for assessing student learning of core and programmatic competencies. To do so, they created the Program Grids for General Education Core Competencies described earlier. Now, years before they come up for PPR, programs have clearly designated the courses and assignments where they would like to capture student work for both core and programmatic competencies.

Additionally, the ALT created and shared with faculty a PPR Schedule (14.1.001 PPR Schedule81211) that identifies a three-stage PPR Process: Preparing for PPR (P), Undergoing PPR (AR), and Implementing PPR Recommendations (I). This calendar has increased communication to programs by helping faculty understand that PPR and assessment should happen regularly and cyclically (14.7.11 PPR Calendar). Extending the formal PPR from a one-year process to a three-year staged process also made assessment more continuous and thus integral to a program's core responsibilities, rather than something executed only once every five or six years. The ALT also created a timeline (14.7.14 PPR Timeline) for each program, giving due dates for draft reports so that faculty receive better guidance throughout the PPR process. These enhancements of the PPR process reflect a college-wide effort to **provide clear, realistic guidelines and timetable supported by appropriate investment of institutional resources** (FE 14.2).

3. **Closing the Assessment Loop: How are assessment results used to improve teaching and learning?**

Sharing Information with Faculty and Students

Our research confirmed that LaGuardia's assessment plan takes into account the need to **share outcomes data with appropriate constituents** and, most importantly, the need to **use that data to improve our pedagogies and academic programs** (FE 14.4). Accordingly, the Outcomes Assessment website communicates each college core competency with rubrics for assessing each competency. There is a complete timeline through 2015 of the five year assessment cycle. For newer faculty, the website also outlines the history of the assessment plan and the overall process at the College. Special emphasis is placed on closing the feedback loop. The website serves as a comprehensive site for both internal and external audiences about the assessment processes at the college.

In 2010, the ALT added a password protected portion of the site, accessible to all faculty, to archive specific assignments created by faculty to assess core competencies in various programs. This Sharepoint site is a rich addition to the college's assessment work, providing faculty with concrete examples of the kinds of assignments they might develop to assess student work.

At LaGuardia, PPRs are considered internal documents, so they are shared specifically with the departments conducting the studies and with the ALT, the Dean for Academic Affairs, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, and the President. In departments, **student learning assessment information is shared and discussed and is used to improve teaching and learning** (FE 14.4).

We found that **general education requirements are clearly and accurately described in the College's official publications** (FE 12.5) and as part of the outcomes assessment process. Currently, students learn about general education and assessment in four ways: 1) each entering

LaGuardia student receives a flash drive with orientation information, including an explanatory piece on assessment and its role in a student's education; 2) in the classroom, when faculty create assignments in response to general education and programmatic competencies, which students are asked to deposit in their ePortfolios; 3) in the ePortfolio system when students deposit work; and 4) for students taking an ePortfolio Studio Hour to support specific classes such as the Capstone or Fundamentals of Professional Advancement, students learn more about the assessment process as part of the class and their work with ePortfolio Consultants and Student Technology Mentors. In addition, the general education core competencies are explained in the college catalogue (09.2.68 College Catalog-2011-12, p. 170) and in *Student News* (12.3.04 Value of General Education), a publication distributed by Student Affairs.

Evidence of success is seen in Figure 8.5 from the Self-Study Student Survey (01.3.03 Student Survey Results). This table shows the high percentage of students who reported awareness of the core competencies. Moreover, according to the same survey, a high percentage of students believe they have developed their skills in the core competencies (see Appendix 8.11, which also indicates students' source of information about the competencies).

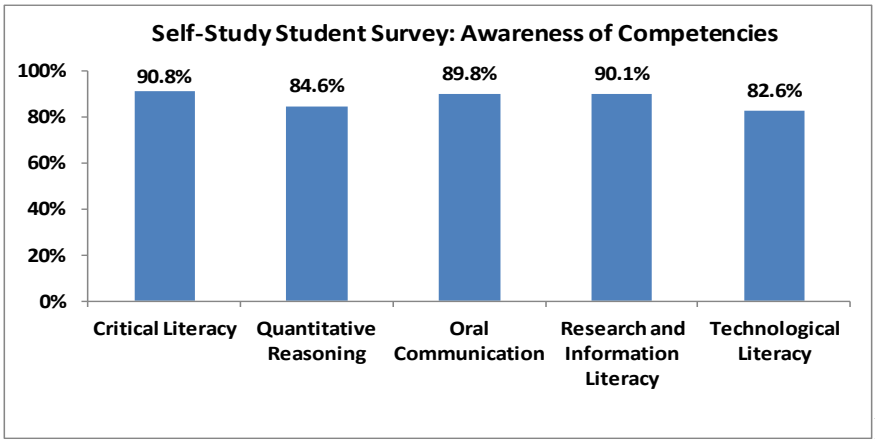


Figure 8.5

Although students are well-informed about the College's learning expectations, and thus about what the College assesses, assessment results have not been shared with students. To help the ALT develop strategies for communicating assessment results to students during 2010-11, the ALT invited a student to join the team.

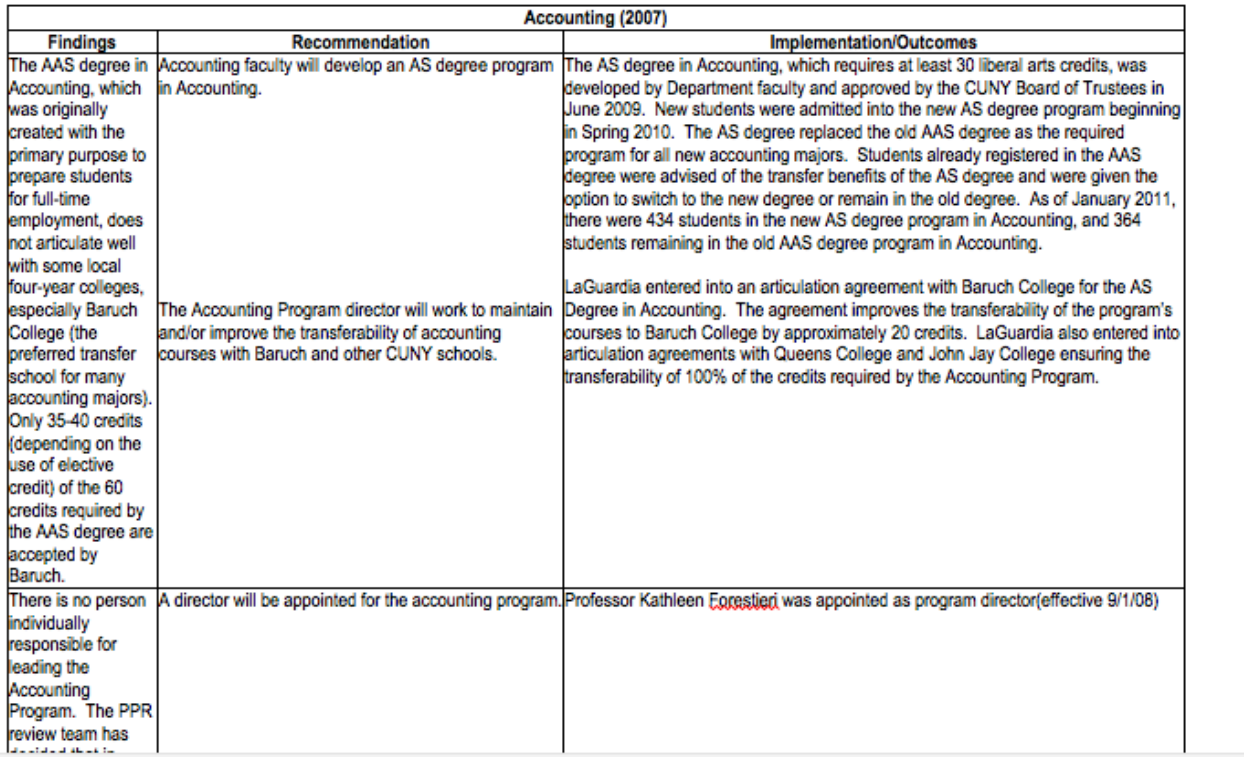
Closing the Assessment Loop: Using Assessment to Design Change

Since 2007, LaGuardia has made a significant effort to close the Assessment Loop both in using data from the Benchmark Readings to help programs work towards effective General Education outcomes and in using data from the 14 Periodic Program Reviews conducted during this period to make and sustain change within programs.

To begin the work of closing the loop from the Benchmark Assessment findings, the Assessment Leadership Team disseminated results from the 2010-2011 Benchmark Assessment readings by sharing the written report with all departments and presenting to the faculty at the 12 October 2011 Instructional Staff meeting. Members of the Assessment Leadership Team have also met with key groups such as the Academic Chairs and the Academic Integrity Committee to follow up on targeted issues. The 2010-2011 Benchmark Assessment Data was compiled cumulatively,

but can be made available to individual programs with a programmatic look at the data upon request. In the future, cumulative data reporting and individualized (by program/major) will be a key feature of the report. Based on the Benchmark Assessment Data, some initial reforms are currently being enacted, specifically through two grants given to faculty this year to work on strengthening the general education core competencies within their programs.

Substantial work in closing the loop follows a program's PPR. After conducting a PPR, programs make recommendations for changing courses, curricula, and programs. The following snapshot from the Closing the Assessment Loop Chart (14.7.15) documents the program, year of PPR, assessment results (findings), recommendations, implementation, and outcomes for each program that has conducted a PPR since 2007.



Accounting (2007)		
Findings	**Recommendation**	**Implementation/Outcomes**
The AAS degree in Accounting, which was originally created with the primary purpose to prepare students for full-time employment, does not articulate well with some local four-year colleges, especially Baruch College (the preferred transfer school for many accounting majors). Only 35-40 credits (depending on the use of elective credit) of the 60 credits required by the AAS degree are accepted by Baruch.	Accounting faculty will develop an AS degree program in Accounting. The Accounting Program director will work to maintain and/or improve the transferability of accounting courses with Baruch and other CUNY schools.	The AS degree in Accounting, which requires at least 30 liberal arts credits, was developed by Department faculty and approved by the CUNY Board of Trustees in June 2009. New students were admitted into the new AS degree program beginning in Spring 2010. The AS degree replaced the old AAS degree as the required program for all new accounting majors. Students already registered in the AAS degree were advised of the transfer benefits of the AS degree and were given the option to switch to the new degree or remain in the old degree. As of January 2011, there were 434 students in the new AS degree program in Accounting, and 364 students remaining in the old AAS degree program in Accounting. LaGuardia entered into an articulation agreement with Baruch College for the AS Degree in Accounting. The agreement improves the transferability of the program's courses to Baruch College by approximately 20 credits. LaGuardia also entered into articulation agreements with Queens College and John Jay College ensuring the transferability of 100% of the credits required by the Accounting Program.
There is no person individually responsible for leading the Accounting Program. The PPR review team has	A director will be appointed for the accounting program.	Professor Kathleen Forestieri was appointed as program director(effective 9/1/08)

Figure 8.16

Each PPR identifies recommendations for its program based on assessment results: curriculum reviews, external evaluators' recommendations (where applicable), board results (where applicable), evidence of students' achieving learning outcomes (that is, core competency results and programmatic competency results), and institutional data (e.g., graduation, persistence, pass rates, course attrition). This chart demonstrates the College's **key assessment findings and shows how assessment results provide sufficient, convincing evidence that students are achieving key institutional and program learning outcomes** (FE 14.3). Where this evidence is weak, programs make specific recommendations to address the findings. This is evidenced through the recommendations and implementations of a number of programs, for example:

- The Accounting program identified that the Core Competencies were not thoroughly incorporated into the accounting classes. Therefore, the accounting faculty created staged research projects and included the completion of these projects as a capstone requirement

within the program. Additionally, the faculty designed quantitative reasoning assignments to reinforce this core competency in the Principles of Accounting class. Furthermore, assignments incorporating core competencies were created and distributed to faculty teaching courses that had been earmarked for Assessment depositing.

- Based on the Business PPR recommendation, the program developed a new computer course. The department has offered 51 sections of this course since 2009, serving approximately 1,785 students.

- Within the Business program, the PPR team discovered a weakness in assessing work for Oral Communication; as a result, there is now a mandated oral presentation in BTM 110.

- The computer programs also realized during their PPR that they had a deficiency in the articulation of their programs to four-year CUNY colleges. To correct this, the faculty established and approved a new Computer Science curriculum and developed new syllabi for four classes.

- In the Liberal Arts PPR in 2010, the faculty team discovered that the inclusion of all seven core competencies in the Capstone Course (LIB 200) placed a burden on faculty teaching that course. Since then the Liberal Arts Chairs have met and redistributed the competencies more evenly across the curriculum.

- Also in 2010, the Veterinary Technology program discovered that they were not successful capturing work for assessment within the ePortfolio. The faculty have completely restructured how the ePortfolio is being integrated into the program across seven key courses in the major, which demonstrate both program and core competencies.

The College has been providing institutional support to facilitate programs' efforts to "close the loop," some of which are coordinated by the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). For example, individual programs have received mini-grants that support program assessment and the integration of competencies throughout a program's curriculum. The mini-grant initiative, described in more detail in Appendix 8.10, is designed to help disciplinary programs "close the loop" and implement changes related to the PPR, most often in relation to the core competencies. For instance, the development of a mandated oral presentation in the Business program (listed above) was supported by a 2008-09 CTL mini-grant project exploring the possibility of video-recording student assignments.

These examples—where information gained through the assessment process is analyzed, the College provides support to develop innovations, and then innovations are implemented (ultimately to be assessed again)—are evidence of the ways in which LaGuardia uses assessment data in the effort to improve student learning.

Moving forward, the College will continue to foster the culture of assessment by ensuring that all programs are able to design and implement changes based on an analysis of outcomes. The College seeks to move away from results that are not well supported by data, such as an example from the 2008 Writing Program PPR which includes this recommendation: "Faculty want more opportunities to discuss basic writing." This example is characteristic of many of the College's older PPR reports from earlier in the assessment cycle. As the College has grown more

sophisticated in its assessment measures, we seek to have each program correlate recommendations with the data analyzed during the PPR assessment process. All programs will need to include recommendations like those in the Business Administration PPR and the most recent Liberal Arts PPR, which includes an "Action Plan" with data correlated to recommendations. As part of the PPR preparation process, the ALT now plans to assist programs in strengthening their assessment methodologies and to ensure that PPR action plans are correlated to the data collected during the PPR process.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions for Standards 12 and 14

1. LaGuardia has developed a systematic, sustained, and thorough use of multiple qualitative and quantitative measures to document and improve student learning. The Assessment Leadership Team has created a body of work that facilitates sustained developmental assessment and made major improvements in the Periodic Program Review (PPR) process.
2. The College has developed clearly articulated, written statements of key learning outcomes and has designed courses, programs, and educational experiences to achieve those outcomes.
3. The Center for Teaching and Learning has been essential to expanding ePortfolio assessment, to educating faculty and staff about assessment, and to supporting programs in implementing curricular and programmatic changes based on their PPR findings.
4. Since 2007, 14 programs have completed PPRs. The Closing the Assessment Loop Chart (14.7.15) documents the cycle of assessment results, recommendations, implementation, and outcomes contained in each PPR report.
5. The College has made significant gains in many assessment areas, most specifically in the use of student ePortfolios to document student achievement and in assessment efforts spearheaded by Program Directors. The PPR process, coupled with Benchmark Assessment Readings, provide the College with valuable data that supplements course pass rates, retention data, information from standardized examinations, and course grades. There has been a steady growth in authentic student assessment, the routine inclusion of student work in PPRs, establishing clear and sustainable collection methods for student work, and using data to inform program changes and improve student performance as measured by both general education core competencies and programmatic competencies.
6. LaGuardia employs an across-the-curriculum approach to general education based on a core set of seven competencies—Critical Literacy (a comprehensive category for three competencies: reading, writing, and critical thinking), Quantitative Reasoning, Oral Communication, Technological Literacy, and Research and Information Literacy—that are woven into course work in all the majors. The Self-Study Student Survey indicates that students are well-informed about general education core competencies and believe they are making significant progress in improving their performance in these competencies.
7. The College's general education competencies do not explicitly address the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives. Instead, LaGuardia incorporates the study of these issues into each program through individual courses in each major and the Urban Studies requirement.
8. For general education core competencies, LaGuardia has instituted twice-yearly Benchmark Assessment Readings to augment the findings from PPRs and create additional direct evidence of student learning on a yearly basis. This new Benchmark Assessment Process will ensure that the College uses student learning assessment information as part of institutional assessment beyond the PPR process. The 2011 Benchmark Assessment readings documented gains in student achievement, while also indicating that several rubrics should be revised.

9. The 2011 Benchmark Assessment Readings demonstrated that the College should place greater emphasis on the collection of baseline data so there is a sufficient sample size to draw from students having under 12 credits, enabling better longitudinal measurement of student growth.
10. The faculty of each academic major have established programmatic competencies with discipline-specific learning goals and outcomes which are publically available on the College's assessment website (14.7.06 Program Competencies). Many programs are still in the process of specifying evaluation criteria for their programmatic competencies, refining assessment methodologies, and implementing changes based on assessment data.
11. To receive college governance approval, all official course proposals are required to list specific student learning outcomes as part of the syllabus.

Recommendations for Standards 12 and 14

1. **Institute a faculty process to regularly review and update the College's core competencies to better reflect changing standards in higher education**. In particular, the faculty team may want to consider including new core competencies such as diversity and integrative learning and devising a process for developing new rubrics for any new competencies. The faculty team will need to assess what technological literacy means in 2012 and moving forward. The team will need to develop a process for revising the College's rubrics in conjunction with the recommendations made by the Benchmark Assessment faculty reading teams.
2. **Pilot ePortfolio assessment using the entire ePortfolio rather than individual pieces in a student's ePortfolio.** In order to gain the richest picture of student development at the college, the College should consider how the PPRs and the Benchmark Assessment Teams might regularly review entire ePortfolios, not just selected artifacts from student ePortfolios deposited in the ePortfolio assessment database. Additionally, when possible, these should be evaluated in terms of a cohort of students who have both beginning and capstone ePortfolios to document growth and change over time in the same students.
3. **Reinforce the beginning point for collecting entry-level data in the ePortfolio assessment database**. While the College has done significant work over the past five years with capstone and advanced level ePortfolios, the beginning point of ePortfolios (in First Year Academies) has not continued as a robust collection site. The College needs to return its attention to the first year and the vital role it plays in collecting a baseline for student work to be assessed.
4. **Programs should continue their efforts regarding the assessment of programmatic competencies.** Programs should clearly spell out the evaluation criteria for all of their programmatic competencies; refine and revise assessment methodologies to strengthen the consistent use of direct assessment measures for programmatic competencies; and implement changes and revisions based on assessment data.
5. **Strengthen faculty's ability to work with data**. The PPR process demonstrates that while faculty teams are able to assess programs and make recommendations for strengthening programs, sometimes this process happens anecdotally. Instead each of the recommendations should be correlated to the data provided in the PPR report. The PPR process can be strengthened significantly by working with faculty to use data to support recommendations and conclusions about core, programmatic, and course competencies.

6. **Improve communication about assessment and its role at the college.** Building on the Program Director's meetings, the Benchmark Assessment reading, the student flyer, the website, and college-wide presentations, the Assessment Leadership Team needs to continue to improve communication about assessment.