



PEARL

Program Excellence through  
Assessment, Research and Learning

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Nebraska**  
Lincoln

## What is PEARL?

- Project with 4 academic colleges at UNL and Colorado State University
- Web-based software that enables sharing, collaboration, and peer review of program assessment practices
  - PEARL is an assessment management system
- A systematic process for improving programs through a focus on student learning outcomes



# Who is involved in PEARL?

- 5 “levels” of participation
  - Steering committee
    - 1 member from each participating college
    - 2 assessment specialists from the university
  - Peer reviewers (faculty members)
    - 4 from each participating college
  - Program leaders (faculty members)
    - 1 for each program
    - Some program leaders are also peer reviewers (but don’t review their own program)
  - Program faculty
    - Work with program leaders to implement PEARL in each program
  - Students
    - Participate in their program of study



# PEARL Roles and Relationships

Communicate, Advise, Share, Assist



Communicate, Coach, Lead, Organize, Assist



Steering  
Committee

- Provide guidance, direction, training and support.
- Oversee PEARL work and ensure forward momentum.
- Use evaluation and feedback to improve PEARL.

Peer  
Reviewers  
(Faculty)

- Provide coaching to program leaders on PEARL website.
- Provide guidance and advice to steering committee.
- Provide assistance and advice to Program Leaders.

Program  
Leaders  
(Faculty)

- Responsible for leading PEARL process within program.
- Input program information into PEARL website.
- Respond to coaching.
- Communicate with program faculty.

Program  
Faculty

- Assist Program Leader with PEARL process activities.
- Communicate with Program Leader.
- Work with program students in completing PEARL.

Students

- Participate in program, complete PEARL activities.

## PEARL Key Features

- PEARL adds value to assessment activities already in place in programs
- Simple to use online interface
- Peer review of program assessment plans
- Sharing of assessment instruments and procedures between programs



## PEARL Key Features

- Easily accessible archive of program assessment plans
- System for writing reports on assessment activity at multiple levels (e.g., college, department, institution, etc.)
- Clear format for describing assessment of student learning
- Identification of “best practices” or exemplars in program assessment



## Peer Review in PEARL

- Programs can enter PEARL at any level of assessment practice – from sophisticated to beginner
- Peer reviewers “coach” and “teach” good program assessment practice through periodic feedback – emphasizing process, not content specific feedback
- Program leaders can respond to feedback and communicate with peer reviewers directly in PEARL
  - These communications are also archived in PEARL



## Peer Review in PEARL

- Peer reviewers work in cross-disciplinary and cross-college teams
- Peer reviewers receive ongoing training in outcomes assessment
- Peer review is done using a rubric developed by the peer reviewers and the steering committee here at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

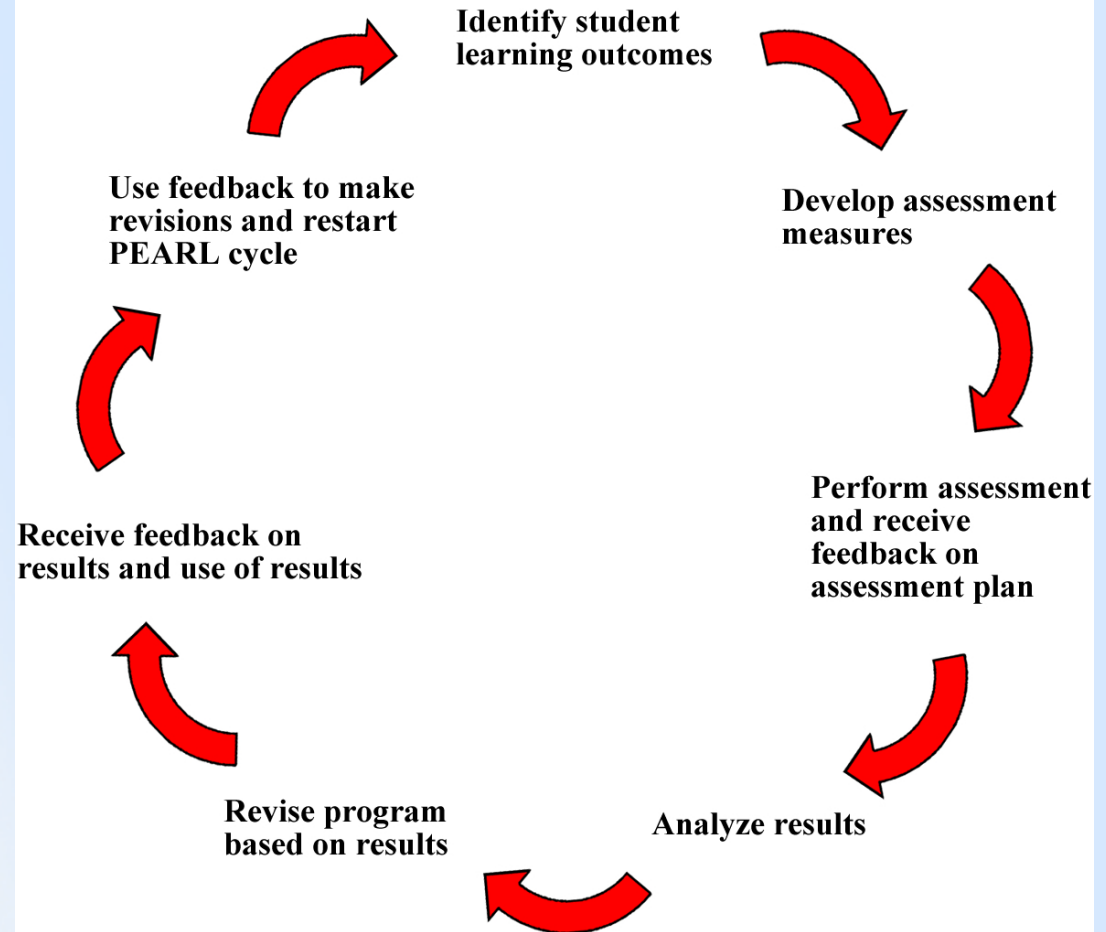


## The PEARL Cycle

- The typical program cycle runs from September to September
- PEARL can be adapted to fit assessment activities at many levels of assessment: course, program, department, college, etc.



## PEARL Cycle



# Components

- Each program starts with a “cover page” that includes program and department mission
- Then, for each of 3 outcomes, programs enter the following information:
  - Student Learning Outcome
  - Opportunity to Learn
  - Question of Interest
  - Assessment Method
  - Summary of Assessment Evidence / Results
  - Use of Assessment Evidence / Results



Screen  
shot  
(1)

**Outcome 1**

Student Learning/Development

Last modified on: 03/21/06

[Classify Outcome](#)



**Description & Methodology**

**Outcome**

In a research and writing project in the following areas, students will demonstrate their skill in presenting their research findings effectively according to the writing standards employed in the field of history: 1) Thesis development and support; 2) Mechanics and grammar; 3) Organization; 4) Transitions and flow; 5) Use of primary sources; 6) Use of secondary sources.

**Opportunities to Learn (Optional)**

The History Program will have the students develop the research and writing outcome in the context of HY492 Capstone Seminar (Categories IV-B and IV-C of the AUCC).

**Question of Interest**

Do research papers from the capstone course indicate that students have learned from the curriculum the skills needed to produce a high quality research paper?

Since many of the graduates from our program go on to attend graduate school, writing skills are very important. The capstone course is a new addition to the program; we are interested in seeing if the capstone course provides enough instruction in writing research papers or if that topic should be strengthened in other courses.

**Assessment Method(s)**

Students will demonstrate the Research and Writing Outcome based on their capstone seminar research papers. Generally there will be three sections of the capstone seminar (with 12-15 students each) offered each semester. A committee of two regular history faculty will evaluate a minimum of six seminar research papers annually, using the attached evaluation table. The chair of the evaluation committee will collect the sample size, collate the results, and present them to the Undergraduate Studies Committee and department Chair. This method measures multiple learning components, thus assisting the Outcomes Assessment Committee, and the Undergraduate Studies Committee, and the History Department faculty in determining patterns in student learning and identifying areas of low performance or that need further analysis.

**Committee Comments and Program Responses**

**Comment 190**

2/3/2006

3:51 PM

Program Manager

402-123-4567

[email@email.email](mailto:email@email.email)

Outcome: Well-developed. The outcome is well written and provides a clear description of what students are expected to learn.

Question of interest: Developing. How will the answering of this question contribute to the improvement of your program?

Assessment method: Well-developed. Why are only the papers from the students receiving grades of C or better included? We suggest that including a broader sample will be more representative of the abilities of students across your program.

Peer Reviewers:

Jeremy

David

Aaron

**Response**

2/3/2006

3:55 PM

Program Manager

402-123-4567

[email@email.email](mailto:email@email.email)

The plan has been adjusted according to your suggestions.

Screen  
shot (2)

**Results & Planning**

[Edit](#)

**Summary of Assessment Evidence / Results**

After spring semester 2004, the Outcomes Assessment Committee examined a sample of six research papers drawn from two HY492 capstone seminars. The mean score in this category (Research and Writing) was 3.38; two papers, or about 33%, scored above the mean (3.50, 4.00). This means that two papers were reasonably well-written, and four were of lesser quality. Well-written can be interpreted to mean a reasonable degree of conformity to the criteria listed above (i.e., a paper with a clear thesis, accurate prose, logical and clear organization, and use of primary and secondary sources). The mean scores for each research and writing component are as follows:

1. Thesis development and support: 3.33
2. Mechanics and grammar: 3.67
3. Organization: 3.83
4. Transitions and flow: 3.40
5. Use of primary sources: 1.75
6. Use of secondary sources: 3.83

**Use of Assessment Evidence / Results**

Scores and methods of assessing research and writing were communicated to all faculty members. Providing this information will clarify department expectations and will help faculty members to focus on specific skills that students need to improve. The low score on component no. 5, use of primary sources, suggests that faculty members, especially those teaching the capstone seminar, might place additional emphasis on the proper use of primary sources.

**Committee Comments and Program Responses**

**Comment 325**

9/22/2006  
2:01 PM  
Jeremy Penn  
325-8598  
[jeremy\\_penn@hotmail.com](mailto:jeremy_penn@hotmail.com)

This is the 2nd round of Peer Review- the review of the Results and Use of Results sections of the PEARL plan. Using the rubric, the Peer Reviewer makes comments about the results section.

[Respond](#)

**Response**

9/22/2006  
2:03 PM  
Program Manager  
402-123-4567  
[email@email.email](mailto:email@email.email)

Thank you for your helpful comments. We will discuss them at our next program faculty meeting and decide how to move forward.

[Edit](#)

[Delete](#)

**Supplemental Materials**

[Add Supplemental](#)

[View Supplementals University Wide](#)

## PEARL Benefits

- Provides common structure and format for describing and reporting program-level assessment
- Teaches outcomes assessment to faculty members through the peer review process
- Improves efficiency and organization of assessment activities



## PEARL Benefits

- Ability to reward and recognize high quality program assessment practice
- Encourages collaboration and sharing of assessment instruments between programs
- Meets accreditation requirements for North Central Accreditation



## PEARL Reviews

- Received positive reviews from:
  - Peggy Maki, Assessment Consultant
  - Virginia Lee, Assessment Consultant
  - Members of the NCA / HLC visitation team



## PEARL Presentations

- More information about PEARL will be shared in joint presentations with Colorado State University at the following conferences:
  - HLC Conference in April, 2007: Chicago, IL
  - AIR Conference in June, 2007: Kansas City, MO
  - IUPUI Assessment Institute in November, 2007: Indianapolis, IN



## Additional information

- If you have questions or would like more information about PEARL, please contact a PEARL steering committee member
  - Robert Fought (Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts): [rfought1@unl.edu](mailto:rfought1@unl.edu)
  - Jessica Jonson (University-Wide Assessment Coordinator): [jjonson2@unl.edu](mailto:jjonson2@unl.edu)
  - John Markwell (College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources): [jmarkwell2@unl.edu](mailto:jmarkwell2@unl.edu)
  - Nancy Mitchell (College of Journalism and Mass Communications): [nmitchell1@unl.edu](mailto:nmitchell1@unl.edu)
  - Jeremy Penn (Assessment Associate for PEARL, Office of Undergraduate Studies): [jpenn@unlnotes.unl.edu](mailto:jpenn@unlnotes.unl.edu)
  - Jim Walter (College of Education and Human Sciences): [jwalter@unlserve.unl.edu](mailto:jwalter@unlserve.unl.edu)

