To: Rachel Boon, Chief Academic Officer, Iowa Board of Regents
From: Megan Vogt-Kostner, Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Planning
Re: Report on 2023-2024 Compliance with Continuous Quality Improvement Legislation
Date: June 21st, 2024

The attached report provides information on course-level assessments conducted at the University of Northern Iowa in compliance with Iowa Code Section 262.9 (36). Faculty teaching courses enrolling 100 or more students during the 2023-2024 academic year were asked to respond to a survey, either individually or in collaboration with other faculty teaching the same course, to collect information on the ways they assess, intervene, and continue to strengthen student learning and outcomes in their courses.

In addition to requesting information on the types of course-level assessments being implemented and the kinds of improvements made in response to what was learned from the assessments, the survey also requested information related to the ways in which learning outcomes were communicated to students. For this year's results, data found that 98% of the faculty responding to the survey included learning outcomes for their courses on the course syllabus. Learning outcomes were also communicated verbally (73%), on the eLearning course web page or another relevant course site (70%), presented with information for specific assignments for the course (52%), or in PowerPoint presentations or slide decks provided during the course (47%).

The attached report provides information on the course adaptations and changes faculty reported making during their course to meet the needs of their students. It is important to share the top five changes reported were all directly relate to the student learning experience. These included: modifying, editing or deleting assignments students are asked to complete, modifying the class time spent on course content to better fulfill the gaps in learning and engagement, changing student activities to enhance student learning and experiences in the course, changing the textbook or learning resources used for the course, and finally, providing more guided hands-on practice during time spent in the classroom.

In addition to multiple-response survey items, the 2023-2024 CQI faculty survey included an open-ended question asking faculty to provide more detailed information on changes they had made to their classes because of their assessment of student learning; seventy-five percent of the survey respondents shared stories of their experiences. An examination of these personal narratives showed several reoccurring themes —revising course-related student learning outcomes and class rubrics to better reflect student concerns and the learning needs of all students, adding a specific grading rubric to clarify expectations for course assignments, adjusting topics and content as needed and implementing more review and discussion opportunities in class to ensure student learning, removing and adding class readings based on student interest during the term, connecting all information in the course to current events of today and creating opportunities for students to share how this content influences the greater society, providing questions for students to consider when completing assigned readings to keep them more engaged and active outside of the classroom, and providing students with more interactive activities during class time to apply what they have learned with peers.

At UNI we believe in the power and critical importance of good teaching. The Continuous Quality Improvement survey for this year again provides evidence of this belief in action.

University of Northern Iowa CQI Report for 2023-2024

This page provides summary information on the types of assessment strategies used during 2023-2024; the following pages provide an overview of the types of course improvements undertaken by faculty and examples of assessments and related activities in selected courses.
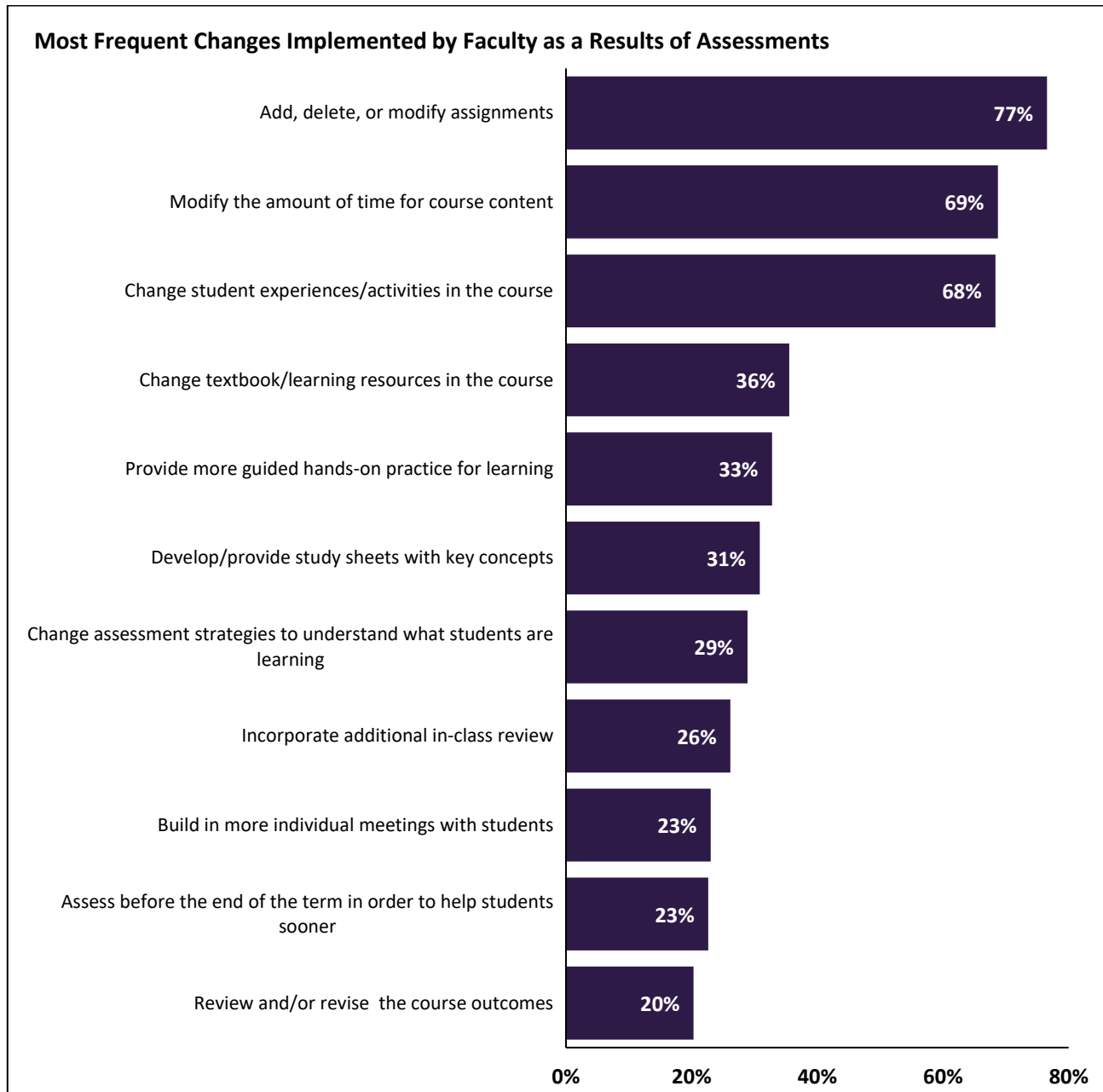
Continuous Improvement in University of Northern Iowa Courses	
June 2024	Report Date
Summer 2023 – Spring 2024	Report Period
Number of Courses, Students Enrolled	
102 courses *544 sections*	Total Number of Courses Offered (enrollment > or = 100 students) Total Number of Sections Offered in 2023-2024 (enrollment > or = 100 students)
83,516	Total Student Enrollment in Courses
Number of Courses[1]Utilizing Continuous Improvement Strategies and Percent of Respondents Reporting	
190	Graded homework assignments (74%)
173	Locally-developed tests or quizzes (68%)
152	Student understanding of content and concepts as revealed in class discussions (59%)
136	Observation of students doing in-class activities (53%)
126	Written or oral student reflections on their experiences and/or learning (49%)
122	Rubrics or evaluation forms for individual project(s) (48%)
109	Specific questions on tests or quizzes (43%)
84	Discussion in individual meetings with students (33%)
76	Journaling, discussion boards, blog (30%)
68	Faculty assessment of presentations or projects (27%)
67	Formative (non-graded) assessments over the term (26%)
64	Faculty discussion of student performance across sections of course (25%)
62	Survey of student perceptions of their learning (24%)
57	Rubrics or evaluation forms for culminating project(s) (22%)
55	Comparison of course syllabi and/or assignments across sections (21%)
55	Faculty review of mid-term and final grade distributions (21%)
41	Peer assessment of presentations or projects (16%)
37	Evaluation of student performance in simulations activities (14%)
28	Clicker questions or polling (11%)
26	Field experience evaluation forms (10%)
20	Evaluate student performance in subsequent courses (8%)
20	Pre- & post-tests (8%)

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[1] **Total number of strategies in use is greater than the total number of courses because many courses employ more than one continuous improvement strategy.**

Other responses included the following methods for assessing student learning: encouraging students to conduct oral presentations or speeches on course-related topics, completing standards-based grading, utilizing different polling tools and techniques (word cloud, survey, game competitions), and requesting formal essays or research papers from students enrolled in the class regarding relevant course content.

Overview of CQI Activities at UNI

As part of the Qualtrics survey administered in April and May 2024 to faculty teaching courses serving 100 or more students per academic year, one question asked faculty what kinds of changes they were making as they gathered assessment information and worked on continuous improvement. The table below summarizes their responses.

Most Frequent Changes Implemented by Faculty as a Results of Assessments

Change	Percentage
Add, delete, or modify assignments	77%
Modify the amount of time for course content	69%
Change student experiences/activities in the course	68%
Change textbook/learning resources in the course	36%
Provide more guided hands-on practice for learning	33%
Develop/provide study sheets with key concepts	31%
Change assessment strategies to understand what students are learning	29%
Incorporate additional in-class review	26%
Build in more individual meetings with students	23%
Assess before the end of the term in order to help students sooner	23%
Review and/or revise the course outcomes	20%

Selected Examples of Assessments

The Qualtrics survey responses for the 2023-2024 academic year included many examples of the efforts made by faculty to keep their courses current and engaging and to support student learning. The examples below are just a very small sample of those provided.

College Writing & Research (ENGL:1005): For this course I utilized daily writing journals with guided prompts based on the subject matter for each day. These journals included self-reflections, freewriting, discussion questions, and other prompts for group work and in class activities. At the beginning of the semester, I had each student create their journal log through Google Docs and share it with me, so I had access and could see they were completed and participating with the journal prompts. With this access, I was able to see what topics/ideas students struggled with by reading through the journals after the class period to gauge which writing topics and parts of the writing process, we needed to spend more time on. I would then adjust my course schedule and class plans to fit to the level of most of the students in the class. The journals also increased student participation in discussions, as I would have them answer the prompts individually first, then share in small groups, and then share as a whole class. Having something written down for the discussion in their journals and discussing first with peers seemed to make the students more confident to share their answers and writing with the class.

Human Growth and Development (FAM SERV:1055): Throughout the semester, I sent students six invitations to join live events that related to human development via Zoom, as well as events in the community. All events were intended to help students think more deeply about optimal human development and apply what they've learned in the class. Of the six opportunities, they were asked to select three that interested them and to post a several-paragraph reflection on eLearning. Guidelines included writing reflections that made at least one connection to something they've studied in the course, such an illustration of a developmental principle, information that contradicts a theory or theorist, or questions the event raised about a concept they would like to explore further. Students were also asked to reply to at least one other students' post. Events included attending presentation by speakers on such topics as financial happiness, procrastination as a creative strategy, gratitude, the brain's neural predisposition toward suffering, and conscious breathwork. Students have responded enthusiastically to this added feature, reflecting in more much more detail than I had anticipated.

First-Year Cornerstone: I & II (UNIV:1000/1010): With the proliferation of AI options for students, I realized that the annotated bibliography typically used in Cornerstone is becoming less useful as an assessment tool. The goal of an annotated bib is to understand how students are engaging with research and to measure how they summarize sources and assess credibility. It also asks students to work with citation. All aspects of this assignment can be done easily using AI. Because of this, I have shifted to using an inquiry essay in place of an annotated bib. An inquiry essay is a genre of writing that asks students to engage with sources, track their research process, and reflect on the impact each source has had on their thinking. As such, it still asks students to summarize each source, but then it asks students to connect what they learned from the source with their own thinking about their research topic. In the process, they reflect on why they find a source credible, how the source persuaded or didn't persuade them, and why the source either challenged or reinforced their thinking. Students engage with sources on a much deeper level than they do with an annotated bib, and very little of the work can be created through AI. They may still use AI to summarize the source, but they rest of the essay cannot be done with AI. In addition, the rest of the essay can't be written without having engaged with the source, so using AI to summarize only provides a shortcut on the writing of the summary; it can't be used in place of having read the source. Because of the success of this change this year, I will continue forward with the inquiry essay in the future.

Mathematical Reasoning for Teachers 1 (MATH:1204): I continue, with the team of faculty that teach the course, to revise materials in content areas where multiple students have struggled. For this course, I use vertical surfaces for groups to problem solve which supports student's development of mathematical thinking and their ability to articulate their mathematical thinking. Within content areas where student struggle to reach the learning targets, I have refined the vertical surface problem solving tasks and sequencing them in such way the tasks scaffold students more explicitly towards the learning goals. Additionally, I have made strategic effort to identify the student that struggle with the mathematics early in the class and invite them to come see me to discuss their struggles in mathematics and how to more forward so they will be successful in the class.

Teaching Elementary School Science (ELEMECML:3161): One of the course expectations is to create an anchor phenomenon for potential publication on the Iowa Phenomenon site. While publication is not required, it is an expectation to create a professional and accurate project as outlined in the shared rubric. The potential publication goes through a review from the Iowa Public Broadcasting coordinator as well as course instructor. It became apparent to me that not all students understand basic science enough to write a good science investigation. This allowed me to reflect and add appropriate experiences to reveal student misconceptions and build accurate science.

Social Science Statistics (SOC SCI:2020): For this class I use a variety of low-stakes work to help students practice the material they are learning about to help prepare them for big-stakes assessments. Through student feedback, I have learned that some areas require more low-stakes practice work including hands-on in-class activities that are graded for completion and allow collaboration with peers to improve understanding, working with students in small groups outside of class to help with low-points homework assignments, and utilize an entire class day to review for and prepare for the exams. I also use multiple assessments over the semester to test every two chapters instead of the midterm/final method, which gives me much faster information about when interventions may be needed for some students rather than waiting until the middle or end of the course.

Introduction to Oral Communication (COMM:1000): In this online course, I utilize assessment as a multifaceted tool to gauge student progress, identify areas for improvement, and enhance overall learning outcomes. Assessment in this course is not solely about assigning grades but rather about understanding student strengths and weaknesses, fostering growth, and refining teaching methods. One way I assess student learning is through regular speaking assignments where students deliver speeches on various topics. These speeches are recorded and uploaded to the course platform for evaluation. By analyzing these recordings, I can assess factors such as clarity, organization, delivery, and persuasiveness. Additionally, I encourage peer feedback to provide a more comprehensive assessment experience. Through this assessment method, I've learned valuable insights into student challenges and misconceptions. For instance, after reviewing several speech recordings, I noticed that many students struggled with maintaining eye contact and using effective body language. Armed with this information, I revamped the course content to include modules specifically addressing nonverbal communication techniques. I also introduced additional practice exercises and resources to help students improve in these areas. Furthermore, I use quizzes and written reflections to assess students' understanding of communication theories and concepts covered in the course. Analyzing quiz results and reading students' reflections allows me to gauge their comprehension levels and identify topics that may require further clarification or reinforcement. Overall, by regularly assessing student performance and using that information to refine my teaching approach, I aim to create a more engaging and effective learning experience for my students in Introduction to Oral Communication.