

TOWARD A CULTURE OF LEARNING: ASSESSMENT PLAN

August 2011

PREAMBLE

Briercrest is a learning community. This document introduces our current institutional model for assessment and learning. Briercrest is committed to being a learning organization.

LEARNING AT BRIERCREST

Introduction

Outcomes assessment reflects a commitment to learning. It is a commitment to the church and to our society to provide education that is responsible and responsive to its needs. It is a commitment to the student to share in the responsibility of preparing her or him for life, work and service. It is a commitment to the faculty and staff to take seriously our collective work by clearly defining and anticipating the desired outcomes of our investments. It is a commitment to the institutional stakeholders to steward the entrusted resources in a way that promotes Christ-centred learning.

Targeted Values

We will seek a culture of learning marked by:

- Shared values of reflection and growth in all dimensions of life and practice (individually and organizationally).
- A commitment to faithfulness that draws us to do everything we do with all of our heart, as unto the lord.
- An understanding of development where we are neither distraught by mistakes nor presumptuous about our sense of excellence (becoming offended when people encourage reflection on a process or event).
- A commitment to respect the complexity of personal and social development. Most learning in this environment cannot be captured in an input, process, output diagram. Learning will require a variety of feedback: objective and subjective, direct and indirect, immediate and delayed, micro and macro.
- A recognition that while complex systems typically include an inevitable delay between activity and outcome (especially true in matters of formation), it is still important to draw attention to immediate indicators of progress.
- A commitment to being disciplined about assessment, not allowing our assessment tools to distract us from the pursuit of our mission.

- An expectation that learning from assessment will impact action (evaluation, planning, budgeting). Patterns of dialogue and reflection will become foundational to the building of Briercrest as a learning community.
- A commitment to building a collegial environment that expects learning.

DEFINED OUTCOMES FOR BRIERCREST

Identity

Briercrest College and Seminary is a high school, college, and seminary operating on a national and international scale.

Our heritage places deep value on the Word of God, the work of the church, the value of learning, and the importance of lives of service.

Briercrest College and Seminary is an academic learning community that helps students formulate a Christian world view. The centre of our work is the classroom, where faculty and students engage in formal learning. The context of our work is the Canadian prairies with its space for a unique community and vibrant co-curricular experiences to support the classroom.

We are a Christian high school offering unique advantages in athletics and the arts as we teach our students the provincial liberal arts curriculum from an explicitly Christian perspective.

We are a Christian university that calls our students to engage in formative study of the Scriptures, in liberal-arts learning and in the life of the church, in order to prepare to serve wisely in the church and broader society. Since we invite students to be shaped by the Scriptures, each of our programs includes, alongside the liberal arts, a robust biblical and theological studies requirement at its core.

We are a seminary that offers professional and academic programs that serve the church uniquely.

Mission

Briercrest College and Seminary is a community of rigorous learning that calls students to seek the kingdom of God, to be shaped profoundly by the Scriptures, and to be formed spiritually and intellectually for lives of service.

Vision

The commissioning of many lifelong learners who serve because they love God and are being profoundly shaped by his Word, who make a difference because they have developed skills that prepare them to make a rich contribution, who are courageous because they are joining the work of

our Lord in this age, and who walk with humility because they have experienced what it means to learn and live in community.

Core Values

The authority of God's Word: we will value a hunger for the Word of God by which God reveals himself to us, a submission to his Word, and a commitment to handle this sacred text with skill and care.

Fruitful life of service: we will value the perspectives and skills that allow us to contribute to the church and society over the course of a lifetime.

The kingdom of God: we will value a growing understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and of our only fitting response to that gospel—the giving of our lives and resources to God's kingdom work in this world.

Learning community: we will value learning in relationship and both the commitment and the ability to relate together and work together.

Purposes: Together as a learning community, we desire by God's grace to be characterized by

- a vibrant love for the triune God that aims for God's honour in every area of life
- an integrity that loves truth and regards obedience to the truth as the goal of study
- a profound sense of calling to serve God with one's whole life by sharing in the church's mission in the world
- a growing love for and submission to the Scriptures and a commitment to handle these texts with skill and care
- a competency and confidence to read enduring texts with insight, communicate with clarity, and reason with wisdom
- a love of learning wed to a humility that is nurtured by God's spirit
- a relational capacity that fosters lasting friendships, enables the working out of difference and disputes, and allows effective teamwork
- a growing understanding of and appreciation for the world in which we live and the people with whom we live
- a love for life that embraces the good gifts of God

STRATEGY / PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Briercrest College and Seminary is a Christian learning community that offers rigorous education in each of our schools (high school, college, and seminary) and where students are hosted in residential communities designed to nurture their personal, emotional, relational, physical, and spiritual potential for serving as passionate, thoughtful followers of Jesus.

We acknowledge the transformative value of

- careful reflection upon and submission to the Scriptures
- liberal arts learning (formal and informal) that both invites students to think carefully about God's world and equips them to live productive lives
- experiential learning for diverse forms of service
- life in community that fosters deep and meaningful relationships, and especially life in relationship with a local body of believers.

LEARNING MODEL

Assessment and Development Reports

The institutional learning model at Briercrest is built around the following Assessment and Development Reports (ADR). These reports represent conversation and point in time assessments of the various divisions and programs that make up our learning community. There are six primary ADRs in focus in this report.

Strategic Plan

A continuously updated strategic plan is presented to the Board of Directors and is used to align our strategic direction with our internal and external environments and to monitor progress toward our mission and institutional purposes.

Systematic Program Review

A report is completed by each academic program at least once every five years. The report provides a comprehensive look at the respective program, including external evaluation, and recommendations relating to the future development or withdrawal of the program.

2005/06: BA Christian Studies; BA Recreation Leadership

2006/07: MA Marriage and Family; BA Biblical Studies; BA Pastoral Studies; BA Global Studies; MA Leadership and Management

2007/08: BA Business Administration

2008/09: Core Curriculum Review

2009/10: Core Curriculum Review

2010/11: Degree Granting Review

Systematic Department Review

A report is completed by each department at least once every five years. The report provides a comprehensive look at the respective department, including external evaluation, and recommendations relating to the future development or adjustment of the department.

2005/06: Information Systems

2006/07: Bookstore; Field Education; Public Ministries

2007/08: Athletics

2008/09: Marketing; Health Services

2009/10: Rental Housing

2010/11: Athletics

Portfolio

A report is completed by all students prior to their degree graduation. The report provides a comprehensive look at the student's learning, including external references and personal artifacts.

2007/08: Pilot test of implementation in college (volunteers)

2008/09: Pilot test of implementation in college (volunteers)

2009/10: Full implementation in the college

2010/11: Pilot test of implementation in the seminary and high school

Professional Development Plan

An annual report is completed by all faculty members. The report provides a comprehensive look at the faculty member's development in the context of this learning community, including evidence of their scholarship as a teachers, researchers, and servants.

Annual Report

An annual report is presented to the constituency and is used to present the achievement of our institutional goals and outcomes.

Assessment Cycle

The assessment model works from the premise that institutional assessment should consider seasons of practice that are at most five years in length. We believe that comprehensive assessment becomes distracting and counter-productive if it occurs annually. In most situations, individuals and especially groups of individuals will require several years to act on areas of necessary deep change. The following schedule guides the development of these foundational assessment reports.

Report	Ownership	Cycle
Strategic Plan	President's Cabinet	Drafted in June, reported in October, reviewed in May. Goal-setting for the following year will identify any revisions based on findings from assessments completed in the prior 12 months.
Systematic Program Review	Education Team	Every degree program in a five-year cycle
Systematic Department Review	President's Cabinet	Every department in a five-year cycle
Portfolio	Education Team in cooperation with Student Development Team	Every student graduating with a bachelors or masters degree.
Every faculty member seeking promotion in rank.		
Professional Development Plan	Education Team	Every faculty member annually.

Annual Report	Enrolment Team	Every calendar year (released in January)
Reporting on Assessment/Survey Results	Team owning the survey instrument	The Team who conducts the assessment will produce a summary report and/or a report of results appropriate to the audience needing to be informed of the results.

Student Learning

The assessment model builds on the portfolio as the primary, comprehensive indicator of student learning. The decision that this report be a primary indicator is a new one at Briercrest. While this statement introduces a new chapter in learning assessment, Briercrest has developed considerable experience in the classic quantitative methods of learning assessment.

Historic “Student Learning” Assessment Practices at Briercrest

The assessment of student learning has taken a wide variety of forms over the past decades at Briercrest. In the longer view, assessment was typically approached quantitatively and was service/process focused. When assessment was outcomes focused it was limited to self-assessment (usually by students). These forms of assessment were not integrated as a continuous and comprehensive approach. Briercrest will continue many of these practices, while introducing comprehensive measures of student learning like unto the student portfolio. Opportunity will be taken to build higher levels of integration between the various assessment approaches.

Some of the historic practices that continue include:

Entry Assessment: The primary mechanisms of assessment in this area include the application process, reference checks, and dialogue with enrolment staff and/or faculty members. An enhancement to this process in the seminary includes a pre-narrative for all entering program students. This pre-narrative requires evaluation and reflection on the individual’s current standing in regard to the seminary’s desired outcomes. This assessment is one benchmark for further consideration in the outcomes assessment process.



Entering Student Survey (ESS): A similar variety of surveys have been experimented with to measure the characteristics and perspectives of entering students in the college. The most recent surveys have occurred in 1997/98 and 2003/04. This survey is scheduled for every year in all three schools.

Withdrawn Student Survey; The Enrolment division – Admissions Department carries out a survey of students who have applied and been accepted, but who subsequently withdraw prior to enrolment. The results are used to inform the Public Relations, Admissions, Student Finance and Academic Services departments regarding the reasons students change their minds about attending Briercrest College and Seminary.

Course Evaluations: Briercrest has had a long standing practice of asking students to evaluate their classroom experience in terms of their learning, the instructor's teaching, and the effectiveness of the class. In the 1970s and 80s, these evaluations happened in a summative way by asking graduates to evaluate all of their instructors and courses at grad retreat. In the past 15 years, the students have been asked to evaluate each course as it comes to an end. This occurs in both the seminary and the college. The results of these evaluations are reviewed by the Academic Dean as part of the instructor's professional development plan.

Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI): Various instruments have been developed over the past 20 years to measure student satisfaction with both their learning experience and their service experience. In the late 1990s attention was given to shifting from a pattern of evaluation tied to self-study dates to a pattern of evaluation that would be cyclical and more frequent than every 10 years. Various instruments were experimented with, a standardized form was adopted and it has been used in 1998/99, 1999/00, 2002/03, 2003/04, and 2008/09. This survey occurs every third year in all three schools. There is need to confirm the version of SSI to be used and assess comparative value of using the standard Noel Levitz SSI instrument.

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE): "Student engagement represents two critical features of collegiate quality. The first is the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities. The second is how the institution deploys its resources and organizes the curriculum and other learning opportunities to get students to participate in activities that decades of research studies show are linked to student learning." This survey is scheduled to occur every third year in the college beginning in 2011/12.

Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC): "The surveys provide comparative information on student characteristics and experiences. They target specific undergraduate sub-samples based on a three-year cycle, alternating between: first year students, all undergraduates, and graduating students." The surveys establish a profile of undergraduate students and cover a range of topics, such as: student demographics, involvement in academic activities, extra-curricular activities, skill growth and development, student satisfaction with their university, education financing and debt, and future education and employment" (<http://www.cusc->

ccreu.ca/home.htm). The college does the 'all undergraduate' survey every third year (initiated in 2010/11).

Portfolio (Graduate) Interviews: Graduation exit interviews occur for all degree graduates in the college and seminary. In the college the venue is a 45-minute interview with two faculty members, responding to the program-specific portfolio assembled by the student during her years of undergraduate study. In the seminary the venue is a 90 minute interview with two faculty members guided by the 10 outcomes identified for all students and the outcomes targeted by their degree. The Faculty Council grants formal approval for a student to graduate from either the college or the seminary

Academic Achievement Measures: Individual student GPAs are tracked to determine which students are struggling academically. Those who have a cumulative GPA of less than 2.0 are placed on Academic Probation (AP) which may involve limitations on co-curricular activities. Contracts have also been used to aid in holding the student accountable for their performance. Students with chronic problems in this area will, after two semesters of AP, be "Required to Discontinue" (RTD) until such time they can meet the academic expectations.

Alumni Assessment Survey (AAS): The schools have done episodic evaluation of alumni related to 10-year reviews and self-study processes. Quantitative evaluation of learning outcomes by 2, 5, and 10-year graduates has occurred in 2003 and 2005. This survey will continue to be replicated every three years.

The following table summarizes how these instruments are scheduled.

Survey	School	Owner*	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Entry Assessment	S	Enrolment	Aug/Dec	Aug/Dec	Aug/Dec	Aug/Dec	Aug/Dec
Entering Student Survey	H/C/S	Enrolment	Sept/Jan	Sept	Sept	Sept	Sept
Course Evaluations	C/S	Academic	Dec/Apr	Dec/Apr	Dec/Apr	Dec/Apr	Dec/Apr

Student Satisfaction Inventory	H/C/S	Student Dev		March			March
NSSE	C	Academic	Feb			Feb	
CUSC – All undergraduates	C	Student Dev			Feb		
Portfolio (Graduate) Interviews	C/S	Academic	Jan/Feb	Jan/Feb	Jan/Feb	Jan/Feb	Jan/Feb
Academic Achievement	H/C/S	Academic	Jan/May	Jan/May	Jan/May	Jan/May	Jan/May
Alumni Assessment Survey	H/C/S	Enrolment		March			March
Withdrawn Student Survey	C	Enrolment	Jan/July	July	July	July	July
Bible Content / Literacy Assessment – Pilot	C	Academic	Sept/Apr TBC	Sept/Apr TBC			

*Owner: the owner of each survey process is responsible for working with the target audience to facilitate the survey, communicate outcomes, and build an action plan for learning. Cabinet is to confirm annually that this has been completed.

Portfolio-Based Model

The choice of portfolios reflects the recognition that assessment in a context of liberal arts learning requires a multi-faceted approach. The model has found wide acceptance in the institution as a reasonable model for capturing both the quantitative and the qualitative outcomes targeted in our

institutional purposes and program goals. As an institution committed to liberal arts learning, we recognize that many of the targeted outcomes are interrelated and impossible to measure with any one instrument. To that end, the flexibility of the portfolio, with its capacity to allow for multiple measures and evidences has been appreciated.

The portfolio concept holds considerable promise for the demonstration and assessment of student learning outcomes, faculty member development outcomes, and program outcomes. To this end, portfolios are the foundational tool for assessment of student learning at graduation, faculty member development in the context of rank and promotion, and program development in the context of strategic program review.

Student portfolios add value to a student's experience at Briercrest. A properly designed portfolio will give students broad, consistent, quality feedback from their time at Briercrest. Students should come away with a better understanding of and fuller appreciation for what happened in their education at Briercrest. Throughout their time, students, along with their Portfolio Advisor and the rest of their cohort, will practice intentional reflection and action which should positively contribute to lifelong learning.

Any given portfolio should be the groundwork for a fuller curriculum vitae. Students are asked to record the achievements and competencies that are of expected interest to future employers. A broad range of activities are included so that students can be selective with their inclusions as they apply for specific roles. All students should note the ways in which they have demonstrated competency in self-management and team work. In addition to a minimum of two reference letters, students should collect a range of letters of commendation throughout their time at Briercrest.

The broader feedback of portfolios will not only benefit the student, but will advantage Briercrest as we become more intentional in pursuing our mission and as we demonstrate a variety of outcomes to our accrediting agencies and partners. Of special importance is that students be able to demonstrate in practical ways that their time at Briercrest has helped them to become more fully devoted followers of Christ.

The student should be encouraged to intentionally wrestle with the value of the activities that have been a part of their experience at Briercrest. At least some of the exit work must include abstract reflection (using Appreciative Inquiry or something similar) on the outcomes of participation in these activities.

While overall we want to invite students to become thoughtful disciples, there are three general desired outcomes in the portfolio: 1) Fostering Christlikeness especially as it relates to humility, truthfulness, and biblical inclusiveness, 2) Growing self-awareness and self-management, and 3) Commitment to teamwork especially as it relates to social awareness and relationship management. At

graduation, a student should be able to examine the impact of Briercrest in developing these aspects in her/himself especially as it relates to the ongoing activities.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The assessment model builds from the annual report as the primary, comprehensive indicator of institutional effectiveness. The operational culture at Briercrest shifted significantly in 2004 as the Board moved toward policy governance. The Board adoption of this framework provided an institutional shift toward the identification of “ends” and the corresponding management of these ends. In the evolution of this change of governance, a new appreciation for the importance of outcomes was initiated.

Previously, institutional effectiveness assessments over the past 10 years have been a function of the Executive Vice-President’s Office. This office sought to maximize efforts in institutional needs assessments and outcomes assessments, and to utilize the outcomes of research in setting targets, strategies and initiatives for continuous strategic institutional development. Research functions were coordinated through this office, including student satisfaction inventories, outcomes assessment surveys and narratives, course evaluations, focus groups and annual reports (Institutional, ATS, Peterson, etc.). The philosophy behind the system sought to encourage broad-based assessment and planning as a continuous function and value within the educational culture. As such, various attempts are made to make assessment and evaluation cyclical, continuous, comprehensive, and institution wide.

At this point in history, the learning model has decentralized the functions of assessment. We believe that a culture of assessment is emerging, and that a broader base of ownership is required to achieve the learning goals already identified.

Historic “Institutional Effectiveness” Assessment Practices at Briercrest

A number of historic practices that have promoted assessment of institutional effectiveness will be sustained.

Strategic Conversations by the Board of Directors: For the last five years, the Board of Directors has maintained a practice of identifying strategic topics for extended conversation at each semi-annual meeting. This pattern is now firmly established in the new policy governance framework where the Board is asked to invest 50 per cent of each meeting in the discussion of strategic ends.

Strategic conversations that have occurred in the past five years are profiled in the following table.

- | | |
|---------|-------------------------------|
| 2006/07 | - Degree-Granting Status |
| | - Multi-Year Capital Campaign |

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 2007/08 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Master Plan - Honorary Doctorates - Future inFocus - Investment Policy - Serving the Church |
| 2008/09 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highway businesses - Presidential Evaluation - Future inFocus - Highway Businesses - Our Evangelical Identity - Internationalization - Institutional Covenant - First Nations Listening Study - Board Evaluation |
| 2009/10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Future inFocus - Strategic Plan - College Core Curriculum - Enrolment Plan - Funding Model |
| 2010/11 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bylaws and Institutional Covenant - Christian University - Strategic Plan - Bylaws and Institutional Covenant - Values and Educational Mandate |

Strategic Thinking by the President's Cabinet: The practices of assessment and planning at the level of the President's Cabinet (PCab) occur in three annual, multiple day strategic thinking sessions (August, December, May). The general framework of these meetings includes an assessment of each division (Education, Student Development, Operations, Fund Development, and Enrolment) with attention given to the strategic issues arising. An institutional strategic plan exists as a living document that seeks to bring accountability to the planning process.

Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI): As discussed previously, the SSI has been an ongoing measure of student satisfaction with their service experience (and hence our institutional effectiveness).

Graduating Student's Focus Group: In 2002, a practice of hosting a random selection of graduating students in the high school, college and seminary was initiated. This focus group is hosted by the President as an opportunity for students to represent their class in assessing the effectiveness of the institution.

Associate Exit Interviews: In 2000, a practice of interviewing all exiting employees was introduced by the Human Resource Office. In this context, each employee is given an opportunity to visit with the Human Resource Director to discuss their time of employment with Briercrest and to speak to any matters of concern. A summary report is then provided to the supervisor of the Associate for feedback and reflection.

Passport and Alumni E-Newsletter: In 2005, the format of Passport was adjusted to be a portrayal of the outcomes targeted by the institution. As such, the Passport is an indirect barometer of the institutional mission through its selection of themes, articles, and individuals to be profiled. In 2011, the monthly Alumni e-newsletter was introduced, in addition to the annual fall edition of Passport. While these publications will rarely present a quantitative picture of the effectiveness of the institution, they will regularly present a qualitative picture of what our students and faculty are becoming and highlight the stories of our alumni.

External Audit: At the close of each fiscal year, an external audit firm is contracted to perform a financial and management audit of the operations of the institution. The focus of this audit relates to financial reporting and management information system practice. The results of the audit are presented to the Audit Committee, the Board of Directors, and the general public upon request.

Annual Report

The Annual Report has become the primary vehicle for presenting a multi-year perspective on the institutional outcomes. This report is organized to profile outcomes related to the primary purposes of the institution. In addition to student learning, considerable time and attention is given to presenting the effectiveness of each of the institutional divisions as it relates to the institution's mission.

The Annual Report seeks to: explain, model, and illustrate our mission, vision, and strategic plan; report on our achievement of desired institutional outcomes; gain/retain the confidence of our alumni and donors; report on the stewardship of previous donations; and provide comparative data from previous years to show progress.

CONCLUSION

As this learning model is practiced each year, we aim to see our culture become marked by the learning outcomes introduced in this paper.