Definitions and Foundations of the Resource Guide

This Resource Guide is designed to support the meaningful assessment, development, and recognition of the skills described in the Skill Standards for Professional-Technical College Instructors. This Guide is offered as an example and resource, and as one possible framework for the conversations that must take place locally as part of the assessment, certification, and professional growth processes themselves.

Three general issues have had particular influence on the decisions made during the development and editing of the Resource Guide: the forces of accountability, change, and learner-centered instruction. These forces themselves are subject to change, and to widely varying interpretations. Working definitions of these critical influences are included here, in hopes that alternate perspectives on these fundamental issues will not invalidate the attempts made in the Resource Guide to balance and respond to their pressures.

SKILL STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Skill standards do not lead inevitably to standardization, nor is "countability" the key component of accountability. The Skill Standards for Professional-Technical College Instructors were never intended to make all professional-technical classrooms or learning environments look alike, nor were they designed to reduce the certification of teaching skills to graphing and tracking that which is easiest to observe or count. For the purposes of accountability the Skill Standards provide a menu for assessment rather than a prescription, and they provide it in descriptive language that is defined by teachers themselves as relevant and appropriate.

In the Skill Standards this assessment menu consists of the critical work functions and key activities. It is the function of the Standards to describe the range of significant activities that may be expected as part of the professional duties of the professional-technical college instructor. No single instructor may ever be expected to demonstrate all of them; instructors in some programs and colleges may never be expected to demonstrate some of them. This Resource Guide defines standards-based assessment as assessment based on standards selected as appropriate for the instructional context. For the purpose of accountability the process of selecting the standards to match the instructional setting and culture is as important as the demonstrated skill level in each skill area.

The most directly assessment-related language of the Skill Standards is the list of descriptive performance indicators included with each key activity. These performance indicators are used as the starting places for most assessment activities described here. Skill standards, including the Skill Standards for Professional-Technical College Instructors, were never intended to take the place of instruction, however, and nowhere include strategies, sequence, activities, content, or specific assessments to help teachers gain the skills they describe. For the purpose of accountability the standards may provide single points of reference, but they must be expanded to provide developmental feedback and support.

ASSESSMENT AND CHANGE

Among the reasons for moving to a standards-based assessment model are the constant and non-linear changes in the content and technology of the professional-technical learning environment. There is a need in this complex environment to hire, place, and support instructors who come in various stages and moving in a variety of directions of dynamic professional development.

The assessment examples and tools presented in this Guide are primarily diagnostic in nature. They are intended to support both basic screening and comprehensive analysis of skill levels, but they are dependent upon context, interpretations and other factors both sensitive and subject to change. Instructors enter "the system" not as blank slates, but as growing, learning, fully functioning individuals with histories and directions of their own. Diagnostic assessment does not attempt placement upon a path of linear development but rather a description of complex, inter-related elements in ways that may facilitate their discussion and clarification so appropriate resources and courses of action can be identified.

Skill assessment is presented in the Resource Guide as a direct means of enabling skill mastery. The stages of skill development and learning outcomes for levels of certification are not elements of the Skill Standards for Professional-Technical College Instructors, but are intended to clarify the goals of skill mastery and provide some landmarks along the diverse paths that may lead toward them. Given the dynamic nature of the environment and the diagnostic bias of the assessments, these paths are not to be interpreted as linear or prescriptive but as multiple reference points against which individual movement and growth may be charted.

EVIDENCE AND LEARNER-CENTERED INSTRUCTION

Diversity of learners, teachers, instructional settings, and program types is a defining characteristic of professional-technical instruction. The gathering of evidence of skill level, presented as a central component of this Resource Guide, is not intended to limit or restrict this diversity in any way. On the contrary, by capturing specific examples of decisions made and results achieved, with all their diverse influences and elements, it is hoped that this diversity can be preserved and used with integrity during the assessment process. Without evidence and specific details there is a risk that performances may be compared or assessed in such a way that diversity is discounted or subject to bias or inaccurate assumptions.

Neither the Skill Standards for Professional-Technical College Instructors nor the associated Curriculum Guide specify what kinds of evidence are suitable for certification purposes. It is assumed by this Resource Guide that the evidence will be context-specific and learner-centered. For example, one of the critical performance indicators suggested for assessment use is that "learning is facilitated with clear and effective presentations, demonstrations, and active learner involvement." Evidence of this teaching skill would certainly look different for a lecture class, a shop course, a field trip, and an independent study computer lab. Evidence from two instructional settings could be compared with one another only if the clarity and effectiveness of the learning facilitation is documented from the learners' perspective, and only if the specific details of the demonstration or evidence are documented along with assessment feedback or results. Evidence in this way is emphasized as a means of preserving the complexity and diversity of an instructional setting and the decisions that help shape it so skills can be appropriately judged and deliberately and effectively built upon.

Assessment Framework

The framework for the assessment of instructor skills presented here is three-dimensional. Each dimension is meant to enhance the usefulness and accessibility of the Skill Standards for Professional-Technical College Instructors. The Professional Development Plan forms the basic structure, Levels of Certification and Learning Outcomes add direction, and Stages of Skill Development provide assistance with prioritization and decision-making.

Dimension One: The Professional Development Plan

A Professional Development Plan is a means of organizing and documenting four basic elements of professional development: assessment, analysis, an action plan, and evidence of achievement. Flowcharts depicting the relationships between these elements during initial and standard certification processes are included in Section II.

ASSESSMENT

Relevant assessments include self-assessment, assessment by an administrator or a supervisor, student assessments, and peer assessments such as those conducted by tenure, post-tenure, or advisory committees. Assessment also includes the use of the Skill Standards to organize the documentation of prior achievements and skills. The use of multiple assessments and the incorporation of diverse perspectives on skill and performance can be facilitated by using the Skill Standards as a starting place for common language and criteria. Assessments can be based directly upon performance indicators for skills described in the Skill Standards for Professional-Technical College Instructors. Two examples of standards-based assessment tools, the Critical Skills Inventory and the Comprehensive Skill Standards Inventory, are included in Section II of this Resource Guide. For each assessment included, the Professional Development Plan should include the following:

- The assessment tool, method, conditions and personnel involved
- Performance indicators and skill areas from the Skill Standards for Professional-Technical College Instructors upon which the assessment was based
- Results or summaries of assessments expressed as skill or competency levels

ANALYSIS

A major component of the Professional Development Plan is its analysis of the assessment process and results and the identification of priorities for professional growth. Several suggested areas of analysis are described below.

- Documentation of prior knowledge and critical or core skills.
  In skill areas where the instructor has already achieved mastery, but which are deemed important to document for tenure, accreditation, or other purposes, the analysis section of the plan can be used to clearly communicate and reinforce what is considered essential, while also allowing the instructor to quickly receive credit for and move beyond prior knowledge. The Professional Development Guides for Initial and Standard Certification are designed to provide a framework for this type of analysis.

- Comparison of priorities and levels of mastery with industry and other standards.
  The complexity and context-dependence of the Professional Development Plan makes comparison between plans of little use, but the plan may be structured to provide comparison within and across the assessments it includes. For example, a supervisor's rating of most

important key activities for a position could be compared with an advisory or industry committee's assessment of the same position. This could help clarify priorities not only for skill development but also for communication between the various points of view. The Comprehensive Skill Standards Inventory is designed to provide a framework for this type of analysis.

- Collaboration with colleagues on professional planning and growth.
  The Professional Development Plan can analyze and incorporate results of collaborative efforts with multiple and diverse groups. Discussions with colleagues and administrators about what is most important for professional growth can be reflected in the selection and justification of profes sional development and assessment activities and criteria on the Professional Development Guides for Initial and Standard Certification.

- Reflection on professional practice.
  Self-assessment forms a critical element of the Professional Development Plan. Reflection on professional practice can be documented as part of the selection of assessment activities as well as part of their execution and analysis. All of the assessment tools discussed in this Guide are suitable for use during self-assessment.

- Customization of the priorities and applications of industry skill standards.
  The Skill Standards for Professional-Technical College Instructors provides a broad menu of relevant skills from which individual teachers can select as they develop a Professional Development Plan. This not only allows great flexibility and control at the local level, it also requires that these selections be made deliberately so that they truly reflect important, relevant issues of professional practice. One area of analysis included in the plan could certainly be a discussion of the process itself whereby standards are selected and appropriate measures of these skills are designed or specified.

ACTION PLAN

The section of the Professional Development Plan that actually identifies priorities, goals, and strategies for professional growth must be based upon relevant assessment and reflect the priorities identified during the analysis of assessment results. This component of the Professional Development Plan requires specifying a direction and strategies for professional growth and continuous improvement. Since these activities must be assessed in future plans it is suggested that consideration also be given to criteria, expected outcomes, and applications for learning. In addition to skills at which improvement is the goal, the Professional Development Plan can also include plans for mentoring, presenting, publishing, or in other ways sharing skills at which the instructor has achieved and demonstrated mastery. The Planning Forms of the Professional Development Guides included in Section II are designed to help summarize the results of analysis as a plan for action.

ACHIEVEMENT

Evidence of achievement or other documentation of skill or competency levels is included in the Professional Development Plan to further customize and contextualize the certification process. Examples of such documentation might include relevant transcripts, credentials, certificates, publications, or letters of support. Evidence is critical to demonstrate the relevant application of the generic skills described in the Skill Standards. The gathering of evidence, the documentation of decisions made, skills demonstrated, and tasks accomplished, and the application and use of professional learning will provide points of reference and comparison for future assessment. The Assessment Forms of the Professional Development Guides included in Section II are designed to help monitor progress toward goals and record the achievement of professional development outcomes.

Dimension Two: Levels of Certification

LEVELS OF CERTIFICATION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Washington Administrative Code has defined two levels of certification, initial and standard, but neither the WAC nor the Skill Standards for Professional-Technical College Instructors suggest developmental levels of skill or prioritize the wide range of activities described. The functions described in the Standards are not meant to correspond with methods or stages by which these skills are expected to be learned or assessed. For the purpose of assessing skill development at the initial and standard levels, learning outcomes are suggested here to combine performance indicators across skill areas. The eight learning outcomes divide skills for new and continuing instructors into three groups. Learning outcomes listed below incorporate skills and knowledge from the Skill Standards appropriate for new instructors at the beginning of their first teaching assignment, for all continuing instructors, and for continuing instructors interested in or expected to gain program leadership and coordination skills.

The learning outcomes suggested for initial certification are designed to be less intensive and less fully integrated than those for standard certification. The assessment process for initial certification is intended to be supportive of the use of multiple observations of and conversations on common and essential questions of professional practice. Standard certification offers greater flexibility, and requires more intensive and extensive personal and professional reflection, documentation, and integration regarding the criteria, methods, and context of assessment. In the Appendix, each learning outcome is listed with suggested assessment methods and the key activities from the Skill Standards that can be used to contextualize these outcomes and assessments.

1. INITIAL CERTIFICATION LEARNING OUTCOMES (CRITICAL SKILLS)

These learning outcomes and their associated assessments focus specifically on the critical skills of designing and delivering instruction, orienting learners to a course of study using a syllabus, and developing professionally through observation and planning. The documentation of achievement of these outcomes aligns with the requirements for initial certification of full time instructors and for the review of all part-time instructors by demonstrating competence in the areas of providing student instruction, supervising learning environments, and implementing curriculum, outcomes, and assessments.

The successful new professional-technical instructor will be able to:

1.1. Design and deliver a learner-centered instructional activity.

This outcome specifies an activity rather than a complete course as the focus of assessment in order to simplify the assessment process, especially during a faculty member's initial teaching assignment. Evidence might include instructional materials and resources for the design and delivery of an instructional activity, records of direct observation of teaching, and examples of student work, feedback, and other evidence of student learning.

1.2. Design and describe a learner-centered course.

This outcome allows focus on the development of a course syllabus, but could also be used to assess the development and/or implementation of student learning outcomes and assessments and other critical design and communication tools.

1.3. Evaluate learning environments and methods.

This learning outcome is designed to allow and encourage the new instructor to evaluate his or her own instructional environment and methods as well as observe and learn from others, focusing on teacher-developed criteria and their application during visits to and observations

of shop/lab environments, off-site training facilities, and the work of other professional-technical instructors and trainers.

1.4. Design an individualized professional development plan.
The development of the initial Professional Development Plan and its supporting materials is an outcome of its own, and references are provided in the Appendix to relevant performance indicators from the Skill Standards for Professional-Technical College Instructors.

2. STANDARD CERTIFICATION LEARNING OUTCOMES (CORE SKILLS)

These learning outcomes and assessments focus on refinement and expansion of teaching and other professional skills, using authentic activities incorporating instructors' actual teaching loads with peer, learner, industry, and supervisor assessment of teacher-developed criteria and their application to the evaluation of instructional programs and systems.

The successful continuing professional-technical instructor will be able to:

2.1. Design, evaluate, revise, and deliver learner-centered instruction, using a variety of media, resources, and industry standards.
This outcome provides a broad, course-level look at the essence of instruction. Suggested assessment methods include portfolio-based self-assessment, supplemented with peer, learner, industry, and supervisor assessment of a course or unit of instruction, including materials, resources, standards, criteria, and delivery and assessment methods.

2.2. Provide students with appropriate academic and professional advising, assistance, and referrals.
This learning outcome focuses on another core instructional activity, for which performance indicators are suggested in the Appendix. Assessment methods again include portfolio-based self-assessment, supplemented with peer, learner, employer, and supervisor assessment of student advising activities.

2.3. Evaluate learning systems and programs.
An expansion in scope from the initial learning outcome, which was focused on methods and environments, the outcome for standard certification broadens to include system and program level observation, assessment and evaluation skills. For this learning outcome, suggested assessment methods include portfolio-based self-assessment, supplemented with peer, learner, industry, and supervisor assessment of teacher-developed criteria and their application to the evaluation of instructional programs and systems.

3. STANDARD CERTIFICATION LEARNING OUTCOMES (PROGRAM-LEVEL SKILLS)

This learning outcome is designed to be applied in a variety of content-specific settings and to be flexible to the needs and interests of continuing professional-technical instructors and programs. It is conceivable that an individual faculty member may want or be directed to apply these skills in a number of distinct, specific, significant activities, and so may seek directed learning and credit at this learning level repeatedly. Only this one learning outcome has been suggested beyond the continuing certification core, but it is assumed that others could be designed based on instructor and program priorities and interests.

The successful professional-technical instructor and/or program coordinator will be able to:

3.1. Design and manage a support and development proposal and implementation plan for an instructional program or system.

For instructors involved in program management duties, grant-writing, strategic planning, accreditation, and other activities outside of and in support of their work in the classroom, this learning outcome may provide a framework for coordinating professional development and assessment. Assessment methods might include portfolio-based and self-assessment, peer assessment, and supervisor assessment of a plan related to system development or support, including but not limited to marketing and promotion, accreditation, infusion of industry standards and feedback, advisory committee and resource development, and program articulation.

Dimension Three: Models of Skill Development

The documentation of teacher performance for certification is intended to be based on self-assessment, supported by evidence, and inclusive of multiple perspectives and measures. These assessment skills themselves are recognized as developmental, requiring support, reflection, and refinement over time. For the purpose of assessing, recognizing, and supporting the development of the skills described by the Skill Standards for Professional-Technical College Instructors, two alternative developmental models are presented here as frames of reference.

For self-assessment and assessment by administrators and others using the Comprehensive Skill Standards Inventory a five-column model is suggested. This is an adaptation of a 5-point scale already in use in many professional-technical learning environments. It is included here as an easy-to-use tool for preliminary screening and self-assessment of broad skill areas.

5-point Self-Assessment Scale

1.	NA	This does not relate to my job responsibilities as I understand them.
2.	LOW	I have minimal understanding, confidence, knowledge, and skill to actively contribute and/or function in relation to this item.
3.	MODERATE	I have enough understanding, confidence, knowledge and skill to actively contribute and/or function with minimal supervision for this item.
4.	HIGH	I have enough understanding, confidence, knowledge, and skill to contribute and/or function effectively without supervision for this item.
5.	VERY HIGH	I have understanding, confidence, knowledge and skill to contribute and/or function effectively, and enough expertise to teach/lead other professional-technical college instructors.

The limitations of the 5-point scale include its lack of descriptive, behavioral criteria and its reliance on a supervisory environment. To act as a framework for descriptive feedback, and because so many of the skills expected of professional-technical instructors must be practiced, refined, and assessed in environments where little or no direct supervision is available, an alternative developmental model is suggested. Three general stages of progress toward skill mastery are defined as points of reference. These describe skills and attributes of novice, skilled, and master instructors, and can be applied to any level of certification or any set of skills described by the Standards.

Stages of Skill Development

NOVICE

The novice instructor is able to apply a formula that facilitates essential classroom management and student learning. This formula may include a prescribed syllabus or lesson plan, an activity template or worksheet. Examples of this skill level might include:

- Components of instruction are internally consistent
- Learner diversity is acknowledged and learner needs are accommodated
- Multiple presentation and instructional methods are used and technological competence is demonstrated
- The instructor reacts appropriately to student comments and questions

SKILLED

In addition to the skills of the novice, the skilled instructor incorporates learner-directed modifications to enhance formal structures and processes. Examples of this skill level might include:

- Instruction includes regular reinforcement of the transfer and application of learning
- Learner diversity is integrated effectively and learner needs are met
- Multiple presentation and instructional methods clearly improve learner access to knowledge and skills
- Student interaction is encouraged and incorporated effectively into instruction

MASTER

In addition to the skills of the novice and skilled instructors, the master instructor is able to consistently facilitate learner-centered instruction. Examples of mastery might include:

- Skills for the transfer and application of learning are integrated throughout instruction
- Diversity is used as a resource and learners are empowered to take a leading role in their instruction
- Varied methods are fully integrated and enhance the relevance and effectiveness of instruction
- Student reflection and self-assessment are effectively incorporated into learning