

Wilmington University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Outcomes Assessment Plan

2023 - 2024

Introduction

The Wilmington University Academic Affairs Outcomes Assessment Plan (AAOAP) identifies the mission of Wilmington University as “rooted firmly in building exemplary and innovative academic programs,” within the context of a student-centered environment. Outlined in this document is the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences’ (CSBS) plan for assessing learning outcomes across each of its undergraduate and graduate programs. By design, it is consistent with the Academic Affairs Outcomes Assessment Plan and Wilmington University’s Mission and includes data planning, collection, analysis, and reporting cycles.

Key Factors in the CSBS Outcomes Assessment Plan

- Provides steps to preserve and improve teaching effectiveness, student learning, student satisfaction, and promotion of educational values.
- Provides for consistency with the Academic Affairs Assessment strategy.
- Data collection, recording, and analysis are formalized to provide guidance for continuous improvement as well as maintenance and sustainability.
- A “four-pronged approach to assessment” as outlined in the AAP plan is utilized for assessment. The four prongs are: Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness; Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes; Assessment of Student Satisfaction; and Promotion of Educational Values. The first three assessment prongs include benchmarks and assessment tools; the fourth prong, Promoting Educational Values, “while not directly measured, are values the faculty wishes to develop among students” (AAOAP, 2021).

I. Assessment of Student Learning

Data are collected relative to student learning at the course level, which in turn are linked to program competencies at the College level. These are also linked to graduation competencies at the Institutional level. As cited in the AAOAP, the assessment methodology used will include formative and summative data as well as course-embedded criterion-referenced assessment measures (CECRAM). Further explanations are outlined in the AAOAP (see also, Appendix B).

II. Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness

A second prong involved in “Outcomes Assessment” concerns the measure of Teaching Effectiveness. Student performance is a primary source of evidence here, with the OA data collected and analyzed, along with data from student course evaluations (CATS Surveys) where they are given the opportunity to provide evaluative data in CSBS courses. In addition, the assessment of teaching effectiveness includes a periodic review of indirect evidence such as GPA Reports, as well as the annual faculty evaluation process. The latter measurements and data, coupled with the student course evaluation data, provide key evidence for measuring teaching effectiveness.

III. Assessment of Student Satisfaction with the Academic Experience

A third prong involved in “Outcomes Assessment”, i.e. *satisfaction surrounding a student’s academic experience within the College and the Institution*, is a parameter of the CSBS Assessment Plan. Two surveys are conducted by Institutional Research involving alumni and graduating students which collect indirect measures of student satisfaction. In addition, the LES concentration of the Law Policy and Political Science Degree conducts a survey that measures student satisfaction with program and university services. Also included is the Alumni Survey administered to graduates of the previous year. Relevant data pertaining to the academic

experience are extracted by Institutional Research. Summaries are provided to the College to gauge the level of student satisfaction in key areas. Enrollment data and other indirect data may also be used to assess student satisfaction. The Office of Institutional Research provides the CSBS with annual and trended data for further analysis and review.

IV. Promotion of Educational Values

The Faculty Senate of Wilmington University has developed a set of educational values. These values are actively promoted by faculty. Academic Affairs will provide a status report regarding the Promotion of Educational Values on an annual basis. (p. 9)

Linkages beyond the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences: Reporting Results

In assessing outcomes, this plan addresses the four prongs using several measures including both direct and indirect measures. Data reviewed include but are not limited to:

- Course-embedded measures
- GPA reports
- Course Evaluation (CATS)
- Enrollment data
- Alumni Survey Report
- Admissions and Application data

Process

CECRAM data are collected from individual classes each semester. The Faculty OA Designee sends out reminders of data submissions at the beginning and end of each block. Instructors submit their data using a WuFoo form. Once all semester data has been submitted, the Faculty OA Designee collates and formats the data. The data are then analyzed and reported using a formatted template. The completed reports and associated OA information (assignment

descriptions, rubrics, and raw data) are posted on the CSBS SharePoint site for faculty use by the Faculty OA Designee.

For analysis of outcomes data, Directors and Program Chairs periodically review OA data during regular faculty meetings and share as needed with adjunct faculty and Advisory Committees. Recommendations and/or other direct and indirect measures to assess the need for change and “closing the loop” are shared at designated college meetings. Major changes/findings/recommendations are also reported to the Office of the Dean who in turn reports annually on Outcomes Assessment to Academic Affairs. Program-level meetings include OA findings/recommendations at least twice annually; one in the fall to review spring data and one in the spring to review the previous fall data. In addition, Chairs may also present any significant findings or changes resulting from OA to their respective Program Advisory Committees.

The Dean routinely reviews Course Evaluation Forms, Institutional Reports, GPA reports, and survey findings to assess the College level performance. The Dean also reviews the collated reports prepared by the OA Designee.

Outcomes Assessment is on the College’s monthly meeting agenda. This standing agenda item allows for Chairs to present “closing the loop” information and for discussion of the OA process. Outcomes findings or recommendations may also be placed on the College Canvas site and a notice sent to Adjunct Faculty via e-mail to advise them of the site updates. Chairs present on respective programmatic OA data as part of a “mini OA Summit” held each Spring during a College Meeting.

Annually, the Dean presents the data and findings, including any examples of “closing the loop,” for the college at an annual Academic Affairs Outcomes Summit. Each college presents a

summary of the OA process for the year. During this OA Summit, there is also discussion about the OA process.

Program Review

Academic programs at Wilmington University currently complete a Three-Year Program Review process. Since our mission is to provide relevant curricula and career-oriented degree programs, and in response to the changing external environment, the program review process now includes One-Year Program Snapshots which specifically look at factors pertaining to enrollment, retention, and graduation.

Certain programs, however, are accredited or approved by an external agency which may require a different timetable. Programs undergoing the University's Three-Year Program Review process are to include a section that reflects an aggregate of assessments since the last program review was held. Based on this information, the program review should address the following question: Are students able to successfully integrate learning from individual courses into a coherent whole? An overview of program review results is presented to the Faculty Senate (AAOAP, p. 10).

Program and Graduation Competencies

Student learning outcomes at the University-wide level relate to the achievement of university-approved Graduation Competencies. These criteria are periodically revisited and reviewed by the University's Faculty Senate, and endorsed by the Wilmington University leadership. At the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences program level, mapping has been developed to depict the tracking and assessment of the University's Undergraduate Competencies. The CSBS collects, records, and analyzes assessment data in relation to program-level competencies. Competencies are also measured by the College of Education and Liberal Arts through general education courses.

Undergraduate/Graduate Graduation Competencies/Educational Values

In concurrence with the Academic Affairs Assessment Plan, CSBS courses and curricula will strive to expose students to the following **Educational Values**:

- Lifelong Learning: Commitment to self-directedness, self-discipline and lifelong learning
- Multiculturalism: Sensitivity to diversity and respect for a pluralistic society
- Collaboration: Awareness of self in relationship to others and the benefits of working in teams
- Creativity: Appreciation of creative expression including the arts and humanities
- Citizenship: Commitment to responsible citizenship as a contributing, civil member of society
- Well Being: Commitment to the holistic health of an individual
- Civility: Commitment to a civil, supportive, and collegial campus environment and beyond.

Moreover, through those same curricula, it is intended that College of Social and Behavioral Sciences students earning an undergraduate degree will demonstrate University-level proficiency in the following areas:

Undergraduate Competencies

Oral Communication

- Appraise the needs of the audience and then speak in a clear and succinct manner.
- Research, construct, and deliver professional presentations using a variety of communication tools and techniques.

Written Communication

- Write with clarity and precision using correct English grammar: mechanics (punctuation) and usage (sentence structure and vocabulary).
- Exhibit competence in writing for specific purposes, diverse audiences, and genres.
- Correctly and ethically present scholarly writings utilizing the selected citation and writing style deemed appropriate for the student's program of study.

Disciplined Inquiry

- Employ critical thinking strategies such as quantitative, qualitative, and scientific reasoning to analyze consequences and outcomes and then determine logical solutions.

Information Literacy

- Using information in any format, research, evaluate, and ethically utilize information effectively and with appropriate attribution.

Ethics

- Demonstrate knowledge and application of prescribed ethical codes and behaviors related to the student's academic discipline.

Additional Program Competencies

- Additional program competencies as prescribed by the academic colleges can be found on the college web pages and catalog.

Graduate-level Graduation Competencies

Oral Communication

- Appraise the needs of the audience and then speak in a clear and succinct manner.
- Research, construct, and deliver professional presentations using a variety of communication tools and techniques.

Written Communication

- Write with clarity and precision using correct English grammar: mechanics (punctuation) and usage (sentence structure and vocabulary)
- Exhibit competence in writing for specific purposes, diverse audiences, and genres.
- Correctly and ethically present scholarly writings utilizing the selected citation and writing style deemed appropriate for the student's program of study.

Disciplined Inquiry

- Employ critical thinking strategies such as quantitative, qualitative, and scientific reasoning to analyze consequences and outcomes and then determine logical solutions.

Information Literacy

- Using information in any format, research, evaluate, and ethically utilize information effectively and with appropriate attribution.

Ethics

- Demonstrate knowledge and application of prescribed ethical codes and behaviors related to the student's academic discipline.

Additional Program Competencies

- Additional competencies may be included as per external accreditation requirements.

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLANNING CYCLE

A representative sampling of course sections may be utilized for the collection of outcomes assessment data. The following guidelines have been established for representative sampling.

- As a goal, data collection should be statistically meaningful;
- Data should be collected from all course sections if seven or fewer sections are offered in a data collection year (or 100 students). Where there are eight or more sections offered, sampling may be utilized at the Chair's discretion.
- All University sites and instructional formats (face-to-face, hybrid, distance learning, etc.) will be included.

Guidelines for Benchmarks

The following guidelines have been established for summative assessments.

- The benchmark for program/graduation competencies should be recorded as a mean score.
- The benchmark for rubric-based assignments at the graduate and undergraduate level is a mean of 80% based on the rubric score, for example a 4.0 on a 5.0 point scale.
- For data reported as percentage (e.g., comprehensive examination scores), the target for graduate level programs is a mean of 80% unless otherwise benchmarked by the outside accrediting bodies. For undergraduate programs reporting data as percentage, the target is a mean of 80%.

- The benchmark for student satisfaction with the academic experience, as measured by the Graduating Student Satisfaction Survey, is that Wilmington University will score at or above the national norm.
- The University conducts an alumni survey for program review at one year and five years post-graduation, with a benchmark of respondents providing favorable rankings for all indicators.
- Additional formative/summary assessments may be implemented at the program level at the discretion of the Chair. Benchmarks may be adjusted for compliance with program level accreditation standards or specific program assessment.

Definitions

Formative Assessment: According to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2006), “formative assessment is ongoing assessment that is intended to improve an individual student’s performance” and “is used internally, primarily by those responsible for teaching a course or developing a program” (p. 27). Course-embedded outcomes assessment conducted in some or all courses is done to improve the course content, provide feedback to faculty and program administrators, assist faculty to integrate the concept of outcomes assessment as a routine part of their instruction, and provide consistent evaluation parameters that will inform both students and faculty of expectations. Formative assessment results are the purview of the academic program and College and are not reported at the University level although the program may track the information.

Summative Assessment: Assessments at this level are intended to provide a true gauge of “outcomes” of the students’ experiences at the University. Results are used to evaluate the extent to which program goals have been achieved. Summative data are generally collected in one to four courses near program completion (except for College of Education and Liberal Arts courses). Each program includes course-embedded assessments that are conducted in selected courses throughout the program of study. Each course-embedded project, test, portfolio, or other student learning experience may assess several program competencies.

Direct Evidence: Direct evidence of student learning indicates whether or not a student has a command of a specific subject content area, can perform a certain task, exhibits a particular skill, demonstrates a certain quality in his/her work, or holds a particular value (Middle States, 2006). Examples of such measures include course homework assignments, term papers and reports, rubrics, research projects, etc. at the course level as well as capstone projects and employer or supervision ratings of student performance at the program level.

One primary method of assessment of student learning is through *course-embedded criterion-referenced assessment measures (CECRAM)*. This approach was originally developed by consensus of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and all College Deans in the year 2000. CECRAM is typically implemented through grading rubrics that are designed to explicate each criterion to be assessed and an explanation of the product at each performance level from 1 (unsatisfactory) to 5 (excellent). All Colleges generally employ a five-point rubric. Each program is expected to measure at least one program competency with a rubric (except where external accreditation requires a variation).

Additional direct methods are used to assess student learning outcomes which may include:

- Exams with embedded questions (generally used for science or math courses that may be

measured on a percentage scoring system),

- Clinical evaluations or Capstone projects (generally but not always used in conjunction with a rubric in programs), and
- Standardized comprehensive exams.

Indirect Evidence: Indirect evidence of student learning is correlational -- meaning that data exist which indicate that students are probably learning, but the evidence is less clear than evidence from direct methods (Suskie, 2009). As a result, indirect evidence should not be the only means of assessing outcomes (Middle States, 2006). Examples of indirect methods at the course level include course grades, as well as the time spent on service learning or homework. At the program level, employer or alumni surveys, enrollment, graduation rates, and retention rates are some examples of indirect evidence.

Graduation Competencies: Critical outcomes of the academic experience have been approved by the Faculty Senate and are called competencies.

The undergraduate competencies are subdivided into *general education* and *academic program* competencies. The general education competencies are assessed primarily by the College of Education and Liberal Arts with the specific academic program assessing the program competencies. The graduate-level competencies are assessed at the program level. Each academic College has developed a written outcomes assessment plan that lays out the assessment process for each program. In this plan, the terms, *University level proficiency*, and *advanced level* pertain to the graduation competencies. Student learning outcomes, as reported at the University level, relate to the achievement of the graduation competencies. At the program level, *mapping* identifies the linkage of graduation competencies, program competencies, course objectives, and assessment measures.

College Meetings and Advisory Committees

It is critical for all faculty to be informed of academic assessment results. Each program has a process by which all key stakeholders are apprised, generally during an Advisory Committee Meeting. Members of the faculty also participate in regular college meetings to review assessment data and processes. During these meetings, closing the loop highlights are shared, along with specific changes in areas such as curriculum, pedagogy, or policy. In addition, program-related meetings are conducted as needed during the year as a method to keep the full-time and adjunct faculty apprised of program information which includes OA information as appropriate.

Source: Wilmington University Academic Affairs Assessment Plan 2009 and 2021.

References

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