



WCU

Exemplary Practices in Academic Program Assessment Plans

AY 2017-2018

Consistent with the assessment principle of continuous improvement, West Chester University maintains its commitment to improving student learning outcomes within academic programs. Program-level student learning assessment plans are evaluated annually through the institution's annual Assurance of Student Learning (ASL) initiative. As part of this yearly enterprise, the University Assessment Advisory Committee (UAAC) recognizes and celebrates academic programs that are engaged in effectual and exemplary work to demonstrate student learning outcomes. Only programs achieving high scores (4) in the most recent ASL review are considered for inclusion. Please review and consider ways in which the examples may be modified for use within your respective program(s). For more information about the examples please contact the respective assessment coordinator (contact information provided). To nominate a program for recognition in future Exemplary Practices documents, please email: aturner@wcupa.edu.

Changing with the Times

Department of Anthropology and Sociology:

After relying on course grades as their primary assessment measure, the **BA in Sociology** program adopted a series of embedded course assessments to measure student learning outcomes related to the knowledge of concepts and theories pertinent to the understanding of human societies. This labor-intensive change is consistent with current assessment research and best practices.

The reliability and validity of using course grades as a measure of student learning outcomes is debated within assessment circles.¹ Critics generally cite the summative nature of course grades, variations in

grading systems within institutions, among instructors, across and between disciplines, and even among the various program levels of education (undergraduate, graduate and certificate).

Another contention between those who support and those who oppose the use of course grades includes the method by which the grade is derived. Some programs and teachers may use various methods to assess student learning. The course grade could include extraneous assessment of participation, attendance, and assessment not related to the target GE category. Thus, the variation in instructor's grading criteria and grading emphases contributes to a nonstandard system of determining course grades.²

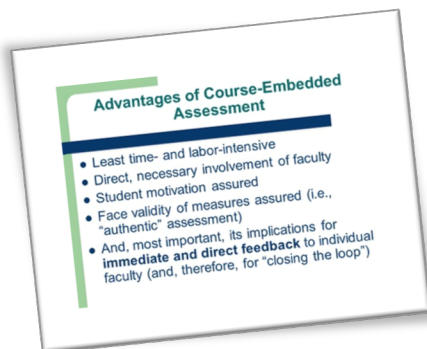
¹ Canfield, M., Kivisalu, T., Van Der Karr, C., King, C., & Phillips, C. (2015). The Use of Course Grades in the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes for General Education. *Educational Measurement and Assessment*, 5(4), 1-13.

² Straight, H. S. (2010, May). Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes vs. Grades: The Difference between Assessment and Evaluation. *California Educator*.

Due to these limitations and general faculty agreement that the use of course grades did not allow for formative assessment, faculty agreed on the use and development of a series of three exams administered in SOC 300, the central course related to the program's knowledge of concepts and theories learning outcome.

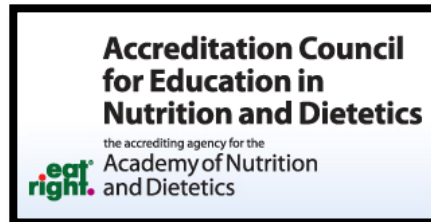
Each exam covers approximately one third of the course curriculum and is composed of 20 multiple choice questions worth 60% of the grade and a choice of three out of six written response questions worth 40% of the grade. Scores for written response questions are determined by the instructor using a rubric based on accuracy and completeness. The use of these exams and related rubrics across sections and semesters allows for a more nuanced and standardized assessment protocol. Faculty have indicated that similar embedded course assessments will be developed and used in the future to assess the program's other student learning outcomes.

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Department of Nutrition: The mission of the Didactic Program in Dietetics, aka **BS in Nutrition** program, at WCU is to provide quality education that prepares graduates to successfully pursue careers in food, nutrition and

health-related professions. Critical to the adequate preparation of professionals is ensuring competency in areas deemed critical by relevant accrediting bodies.



The external accrediting body monitoring the student learning outcomes the Department of Nutrition and its programs is the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND). In 2014, the Nutrition Department revamped its assessment plans for all programs to align with ACEND's revised assessment standards. Again, in 2017, ACEND updated its assessment standards. Faculty in the Department of Nutrition worked quickly to integrate the new standards into the BS in Nutrition's program assessment plan.

This work involved the operationalization of new student learning outcomes and subsequent curricular adjustments as well as the identification of appropriate measures and criterion. Further, these revisions have been seamless, avoiding any lapses in data collection and analysis. The efforts of the Department of Nutrition leadership and faculty to maintain continuous assessment throughout this period is commendable.

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CBPM School of Business: The College of Business and Public Management's **School of Business** (inclusive of the undergraduate programs from the Departments of Accounting, Economics, Finance, Management and Marketing) has engaged in a similar restructuring of its assessment plan in response to its external accrediting body, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB).



In response to feedback from the AACSB reaccreditation visit in January of 2017, the School of Business redesigned its ASL process focusing on program-level learning outcomes twice per five-year accreditation period. This work has involved intensive faculty training and the formation of an Undergraduate Curriculum Management Committee.

Consistent with AACSB guidance, the School of Business has developed common learning goals and objectives, mapped the curriculum, developed common measures (i.e., six rubrics and two exams) and revised the senior exit survey.

The Undergraduate Curriculum Management Committee consists of assessment coordinators from each of the participating departments.

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