



WCU Exemplary Practices in Academic Program Assessment Plans

AY 2018 – 2019

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.

Mixed Methods: Combining Direct and Indirect Assessment

Direct assessments provide for the direct examination or observation of student knowledge or skills against measurable learning outcomes. Indirect assessments of student learning ascertain the perceived extent or value of learning experiences. They assess opinions or thoughts about student knowledge or skills. In combination, these assessment methods offer a more comprehensive view of student learning.

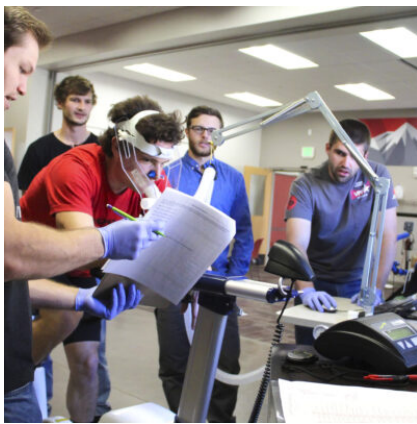
The **Exercise and Sports Physiology MS** program in the Department of Kinesiology utilizes both direct and indirect measures to assess student learning outcomes relative to subject area content knowledge.

The direct measure is a 12-question written exam examination and the indirect measure is a peer-to-peer interview instrument administered by students. An analysis of results revealed that student perception of content knowledge in some areas was lower than expected.

Faculty developed a careful action plan to analyze specific areas (content knowledge) where students felt the most unease and planned how to remediate it. First, they decided to conduct an item-analysis of the interview instrument to identify the areas where students felt the weakest, and to include additional formative_evaluation opportunities. Once these are identified, content-delivery of the corresponding material will be revised to improve students' learning. Additional formative evaluation

opportunities (i.e., in class prompts, tailored assignments) will be offered to allow for continuous feedback. Nearing course-completion, the same content-knowledge measure will be administered to assess for any improvement in students' success.

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Indirect Assessment for Curricular Oversight

The **Master of Public Administration** (MPA) program in *the Department of Public Policy and Administration* also uses indirect assessment to complement the more traditional direct assessment data. The skills self-assessments administered at the beginning and end of the program (pre- and posttest) reveal how prepared and confident students feel to enter professional public service.

Indirect assessment methods do not directly measure students' performance, but can provide useful information,

especially relative to program or curriculum review. Indirect assessment provides valuable insight and feedback of students' views of what they are learning, how programs and services are administered, etc.

Master of Public Administration students complete an initial Skills Self-Assessment as part of the program's gateway course, PPA 500 Foundations of Public Service, and a final Skills Self-Assessment as part of the program's culminating experience, PPA 600 Capstone Seminar in Public Policy and Administration.

The Self Skills-Assessments address the five universal required competencies dictated by the program's external accrediting body. Faculty are able to determine areas of strength and weakness relative to student learning objectives as students enter the program and are also able to use the final assessments to identify and address program-wide curricular strengths and weaknesses.

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Peer-to-Peer Support as Indirect Assessment

The **Graphic and Interactive Design BFA** program in the *Department of Art and Design* utilizes indirect assessment in a unique way that supports the program's critical analysis and communication learning

outcomes. Following individual sophomore assessments, students who do not meet standards in specific areas are paired with a student mentor who has demonstrated skill in that area. The faculty review committee selects and invites the strongest students in the BFA program to serve as mentors. The mentors work with the identified sophomores on their areas of weakness in the first 8 weeks of the following semester. The review committee meets with the student pairs at the beginning of the semester to remind them of their goals and responsibilities. Before the end of the ninth week of the semester, the student makes an appointment to review their new work with a member of the review committee.

Mentors serve as a thought and skill partner for students on their academic journey and help empower students to become autonomous learners and agents of their own change. They express understanding of students' aspirations and fears and support their success by acting as an advocate for students' best interests.

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