

Summary of Program Assessment Reporting for Academic Year 2019-20

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Overview of Current Practice

For our annual academic program assessment process, we define “Programs” to include academic units that offer majors, minors and certificates at the graduate and undergraduate level, as well as our General Education curriculum and our Honors curriculum. Other than General Education and Honors, an individual Program might offer a single degree (e.g. Exercise Science, which offers a B.S. degree), or might offer multiple degrees and credentials (e.g., Art & Design, which offers B.A. and B.F.A. degrees and multiple minors).

Programs were originally identified based on their Program Learning Outcomes—any major, minor, or certificate with unique PLOs was considered a Program. However, this led to inconsistency across campus where some minors and certificates were considered “Programs” from an assessment standpoint, but others were not. In order to standardize the assessment expectations across campus, and in consultation with Dr. Sue Monahan, our Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities Accreditation Liaison Officer, minors and certificates are no longer assessed as stand-alone “Programs”. Of the minors and certificates that were previously “Programs”, most are closely connected to a major and now fall under the larger umbrella that includes the major. Two minors—French and German—are now not captured in our annual Program Assessment framework, but will be included in the 7-year Program Review performed by Modern Languages. A complete listing of our current Programs is included below (Appendix A).

All Programs have at least three Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), and at least one PLO is aligned to an Undergraduate Learning Outcome (ULO) or Graduate Learning Outcome (GLO). Programs should also ensure that their courses align to at least one PLO, ULO, GLO, or General Education Learning Outcome (GELO), and should clearly identify on all course syllabuses the alignments featured in that course.

Each Program is responsible for annually assessing at least one PLO, using the instruments, assignments and strategies that the Program determines to be appropriate. Each PLO should be assessed within every three-year cycle. Engaging in conversation with all members of the Program based upon the assessment information, and reporting on those conversations, including any curricular decision making, is an important element of the process.

Overview of Results

Reporting Trends

In the fall of 2020, 58 programs were expected to submit a 2019-20 Program Assessment Report. Of those 58 Programs, 70% completed their reports by Dec. 31, 2020. For comparison, the reporting rate for 2017-18 was 88% as of December 15, 2018 and the reporting rate for 2018-19 was 65%. While there was a small improvement from 2018-19 to 2019-20, it is important to note that only 28 programs (48%) completed a Program Assessment Report by December 31 for both academic years.

Process of Reviewing Program Assessment Reports

In an effort to identify which aspects of program assessment need improvement, for the past two assessment cycles I have used a rubric to evaluate all submitted assessment reports (Appendix B). This rubric has been distributed to Program Assessment Coordinators and has been posted to the WOU Academic Effectiveness page for several years. Last year I provided feedback in multiple ways: 1) I presented an overview of our assessment practices to the Faculty Senate, 2) I provided the Program Assessment Coordinators with an overview report of university practices, and 3) I provided each academic program with their scores on the rubric. Several programs indicated that they did not feel that the numeric feedback was appropriate or productive, and preferred to receive a written summary of my review of their assessment reports. Therefore, while I scored the 2019-20 Program Assessment Reports using the rubric in order to determine if there were any changes in our assessment practices as an institution, I did not send the numeric scores to academic programs but instead sent written feedback.

Comparison of 2018-19 reports to 2019-20 reports

Based on my review of the 2018-19 reports, I identified two obvious areas where we needed improvement as an institution. First, most programs had identified targets for their students, but many programs didn't have a rationale for those targets. Second, the documentation of where assessment evidence was being stored was often not very specific. Providing a location for the assessment data and successfully archiving the data in that location is important for the long-term stability of our assessment process.

Similar to my review of the 2018-19 reports, my evaluation of the 2019-20 reports was based solely on information provided in the submitted assessment reports. It is possible that a given program engaged in some of the assessment behaviors that are included in the rubric, but that I did not find evidence of that behavior reflected in the written report. It is also possible that I misunderstood aspects of particular reports. I feel that those details are not particularly important for this exercise—my goal was to get an overview of assessment at WOU. If small details were not reported, or if I missed details which were reported, those omissions won't change the big picture view of our campus assessment activities.

Compared to the 2018-19 Program Assessment Reports, there was widespread improvement in the assessment reporting practices across the university (Table 2). The overall average score increased from 19.6 ± 0.7 (mean \pm SEM) to 22.1 ± 0.7 . For programs that submitted reports in both 2018-19 and 2019-20 ($n = 28$), the scores for the 2019-20 reports were significantly greater than the scores for the 2018-19 reports (paired t-test, $p = 0.03$). In particular, programs improved in their reporting of where they were storing the assessment evidence and in their descriptions of their planned actions.

It is important to acknowledge some caveats about the above findings. Because this is the second time I have reviewed all of the submitted Program Assessment Reports, I am more familiar with the idiosyncrasies of reporting by various programs and might have found evidence of assessment practices that I missed last year. Second, I have a vested interest in seeing improvement in our assessment processes. Both of these factors may have biased my reviews of the programs and led to inflated scores.

Table 2: Average scores for all academic programs that submitted Program Assessment Reports

	Rubric categories											Total
	Outcomes	Target	Data Source	Means of Assessment	Means of Scoring	Evidence Storage	Findings	Dissemination	Actions	Reporting	Pacing	
2018-19 Average	1.9	1.1	2.5	2.0	2.0	1.2	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.9	2.1	19.6
2019-20 Average	2.0	1.4	2.6	2.0	2.2	1.7	1.7	1.8	2.2	2.2	2.1	22.1

Program Assessment Reporting strengths and weaknesses

Similar to 2018-19, a general strength across campus was the identification of appropriate data sources and the collection of data. Many of our programs are still using capstone experiences that are common to all students in their program. Programs generally are either sampling all students or sampling is random. Programs also typically use scoring methods that allow faculty to clearly distinguish different levels of performance and to analyze components of student work.

However, once again there was often a disconnect between the scoring method and the findings that were reported. For example, multiple Programs used rubrics which would enable them to analyze components of student work, but only reported holistic grades for their students. It is possible that discussions among Program faculty were more nuanced, and that those nuances were not provided in their report. Additionally, while it is not reflected in the reports, in conversations with Program Assessment Coordinators I frequently hear that only a subset of program faculty engage in the assessment process.

In summary, my opinion is that for the programs that are filing assessment reports, the faculty that participate in assessment are generally engaging in good assessment practices and that the primary weaknesses in our assessment practices is in the reporting of our work.

Goals for 2020-21 and 2021-22 Program Assessment Reporting

The next deadline in our Program Assessment process is the June 30 deadline for submitting 2021-22 Program Assessment Plans. We are still struggling, as an institution, to regularly complete Program Assessment Reports—as noted above, only 48% of programs completed reports for both the 2018-19 and 2019-20 academic years. Therefore, in an effort to improve our reporting, my goal is to meet individually with all the Program Assessment Coordinators to make sure that they are on track to complete a report for the 2020-21 academic year and that they have a plan in place for the 2021-22 academic year.

During the conversations with Program Assessment Coordinators, in addition to discussing the assessment plans for the 2020-21 and 2021-22 academic years, I plan to discuss how we can increase faculty participation—if needed—from individual programs. The Faculty Senate is also currently collecting results from a survey about assessment practices. Hopefully the survey results and the conversations with Program Assessment Coordinators will both result in some ideas to help reluctant faculty embrace the assessment process.

Lastly, I also plan to update the rubric I have been using to review Program Assessment Reports. The rubric is not ideal and requires some arbitrary scoring decisions. For example, in the category “Data Source”, “Data is collected, but not at a consistent point in the program” is considered a Benchmark-level assessment practice and “Data collected includes work performed near the end of the academic program” is Satisfactory-level practice; however, it is common for programs to collect data from introductory classes which are at a consistent point in the program but is not collected near the end of the academic program. Changing the rubric means that the scores from the 2019-20 and 2020-21 reports will not be directly comparable, but it should improve our ability to track our assessment processes in the long-term.

College of Education

Deaf and Professional Studies

ASL Studies
ASL/English Interpreting
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education
Interpreting Studies
Rehabilitation Counseling

Education and Leadership

Early Childhood Studies
Educational Technology
Teaching, MA

Education, MS

Elementary Mathematics Specialist
ESOL
Reading Specialist
Educational Technology
Teaching, MA
Special Education
Teacher Education

Health and Exercise Science

Community Health
Exercise Science

University Academic Programs

General Education
Honors
Interdisciplinary Studies
Liberal Studies

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Behavioral Sciences

Gerontology
Psychology

Business and Economics

Business
Economics

Creative Arts

Art and Design
Dance
Contemporary Music, MM
Music
Theatre Arts

Criminal Justice

Criminal Justice, MA
Criminal Justice

Computer Science

Computer Science
Computer Science and Mathematics
Information Systems
Management and Information Systems, MS

Humanities

Communication Studies

English Studies

Intergrated English Studies Concentration
Linguistics Concentration
Literature Concentration
Writing Concentration
Humanities
Spanish
Philosophy

Natural Science and Mathematics

Biology
Chemistry
Earth and Physical Science
Mathematics

Organizational Leadership

Organizational Leadership, MA

Social Science

Anthropology
Geography & Sustainability
Geography
Sustainability
History
International Studies
Political Science
Public Policy and Administration
Social Science
Sociology

Appendix B: Rubric for Evaluating Assessment Reports

	Missing	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Exemplary (these practices in addition to those that are satisfactory)
Mission	___	___ Statement does not clearly describe the program's purpose	___ Clearly states broad aspects of the program's function ___ Aligned with university mission	___ Includes purpose, primary functions, activities, and stakeholders ___ Expands on university mission
Outcomes	___	___ Not aligned with program mission ___ Not measurable ___ Outcomes are expressed as statements that include multiple outcomes	___ Aligned with and specific to the program mission ___ Clearly measurable ___ Expressed in language that focuses on what students will be able to demonstrate	___ Have evolved based on previous assessments ___ Is responsive to new information and changing environments
Target	___	___ Target lacks rationale	___ Target is clearly stated and has defensible rationale	___ Targets are responsive to previous assessments, new information and changing environments ___ Targets will stretch the program and its students
Data Source	___	___ Data is not collected at a consistent point in the program ___ Data collection is post-hoc rather than planned	___ Data is collected towards the end of the academic program ___ Sampling is random (for larger programs) or all majors are included (<10 grads per year) ___ Criteria for student work is <i>coordinated</i> among program faculty who contribute	___ Data is collected from a culminating experience shared by all students
Means of Assessment	___	___ Does not match outcomes ___ Does not describe data collection process	___ Content to be assessed fits outcomes ___ Data collection process is briefly described ___ Direct measures (e.g., student work) are used	___ Designed to promote curricular improvement ___ Rationale is clearly articulated ___ Direct and indirect measures are used
Means of Scoring	___	___ Rubric or standards are referenced but not attached ___ Scoring is done by instructor who assigned the work ___ Scores are not broken down to allow for analysis (e.g., based on holistic grade)	___ Rubric provided that describes different levels of performance ___ Scoring allows for analysis of aspects of student performance	___ Rubric clearly differentiates different levels of performance ___ Reliability is ensured through more than one scorer

	Missing	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Exemplary (these practices in addition to those that are satisfactory)
Evidence Storage	___	___ Student work is not retained	___ Samples of student work are retained ___ Documentation of assessment process submitted to Division Chair, Dean and Academic Effectiveness office ___ Data is stored in a specific, identified location so it can be easily located by Division Chair upon request	___ Evidence that assessment is used to improve curriculum is made public in research on teaching & learning ___ Assessment is referenced, when appropriate, in the curriculum change process
Findings	___	___ Holistic scoring does not allow for analysis of components of student performance	___ Components of student performance are identified and analyzed	___ Multiple data points are available ___ Trends over time are discussed
Dissemination	___	___ Findings are submitted to university but not discussed among faculty	___ Findings are discussed at a faculty meeting	___ Findings are disseminated to all stakeholders (e.g., instructors)
Actions (use of results)	___	___ Actions not aligned with outcomes sought ___ No improvements described for findings that fail to meet the target	___ Action plan is developed from findings and is aligned with outcomes sought ___ Clearly describes intended changes and hypothesized improvements ___ Program shows use of assessment results for improvement	___ Responsibilities for action are assigned in the report ___ Target implementation date for action is stated ___ Implement and planned changes are described and linked to assessment data (if no changes are reported, an explanation is provided)
Reporting	___	___ Annual report is incomplete or not up-to-date	___ Report is complete (all questions are answered) and up to date	___ Additional documentation describes methods, findings, and actions taken in complete detail ___ Report shows continuity with previously submitted reports
Pacing	___	___ Pacing of study of outcomes is such that all outcomes will not be assessed in a three year period	___ Outcomes are assessed at a rate where all outcomes will be assessed in a three year period	___ All outcomes are assessed annually