

Summary of Program Assessment Reporting Academic Year 2018-19

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Overview of Current Practice

For our annual academic assessment process, we define “Programs” to include academic units that offer majors, minors and certificates at the graduate and undergraduate level, as well as general education curricula. 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). A complete listing of our current Programs is included (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 or ULO, GLO, or General Education Learning Outcome (GELO), and should clearly identify on all course syllabi the PLOs, ULOs, GLOs, and GELOs 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. 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 strategy.

Overview of Results

Reporting Trends

For the 2018-19 academic year, 54 programs were expected to submit an Annual Assessment Report in 2018-19. Of those 54 Programs, 65% completed their reports by Dec. 31, 2019 (Table 1). For comparison, in 2018-19, the reporting rate was 88% as of December 15, 2018. Graduate programs had a lower reporting rate than Bachelors programs, with only 40% of Masters and Certificate programs reporting by Dec. 31, 2019.

Table 1: Number of programs completing assessment reports. The “University Total” includes the Liberal Studies and the Interdisciplinary Studies degrees, and the Programs in the Colleges of Education and Liberal Arts & Sciences. The “University Total” is less than the sum of the individual categories because several programs offer multiple degree types.

Category	Programs	Complete Reports	Completion Percent
Bachelors	40	30	75%
Graduate, Masters	11	5	45%
Graduate, Certificate	5	2	40%
University Total	54	35	65%

Assessment Process

In an effort to identify which aspects of Program Assessment need improvement, I used a rubric to evaluate all submitted assessment reports (Appendix B). An earlier version of this rubric was distributed to all faculty by email in September, 2019, and has been posted to the WOU Academic Effectiveness page for several years. I updated the rubric to better reflect our internal assessment process, and used the updated version to evaluate the 2018-19 reports. The same rubric will be used in the next several years in order to determine if we have made improvements as a university.

My evaluation of each program 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.

A general strength across campus was the identification of appropriate data sources and the collection of data (Table 2). Many of our programs are using capstone experiences that are common to all students in their program. Additionally, many programs are either sampling all

students or sampling is random. A majority of programs (60%) also had scoring methods that allowed Programs to clearly distinguish different levels of performance and to analyze components of student work. However, 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.

Table 2: Number of programs completing assessment reports. The “University Total” includes the Liberal Studies and the Interdisciplinary Studies degrees, the Military Science minor, and the Programs in the Colleges of Education and Liberal Arts & Sciences.

	Rubric categories											
	Outcomes	Target	Data Source	Means of Assessment	Means of Scoring	Evidence Storage	Findings	Dissemination	Actions	Reporting	Pacing	Total
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
Standard Deviation	0.2	0.7	0.6	0.3	0.8	0.4	0.8	0.6	1.0	0.6	0.7	3.9

I also found that we, as a university, can make large improvements in two areas without much effort. First, most programs have identified targets for their students, but many programs don’t have a rationale for those targets. In order for a target to be meaningful, the target needs to be thoughtfully established. Presumably most programs have justifications for their targets, so we should be able improve this aspect of our assessment process simply by asking Programs to document their justifications.

A second area of improvement that is needed is in the storage of assessment evidence. In the past year, we had several Program Assessment Coordinators leave WOU for retirement or for a new

job opportunity. In a couple cases, even though the Program Assessment Coordinator stated that evidence was stored “on the I: drive”, the new Program Assessment Coordinator could not locate the evidence. Providing a specific folder location (e.g., Natural Science (I:)/Assessment_NSM_Division/Biology) and successfully archiving the data in that location is important for the long-term stability of our assessment process.

Appendix A: 2018-19 Western Oregon University Academic Programs

College of Education

Deaf and Professional Studies

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

Education and Leadership

Early Childhood Studies
Elementary Mathematics Specialist
ESOL Education
Instructional Design Certificate
Teaching, MA
Education, MS
Special Education, MS
Reading Specialist
Special Education, MEd
Teacher Education

Health and Exercise Science

Community Health
Exercise Science
Physical Education

University Academic Programs

Interdisciplinary Studies
Liberal Studies
Military Science

Applied Baccalureate Core
Bachelor of Music Core
General Education
Honors

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

Linguistics Concentration
Literature Concentration
Writing Concentration

Humanities

French

German

Spanish

Philosophy

Natural Science and Mathematics

Biology
Chemistry
Earth and Physical Science
Mathematics

Social Science

Anthropology

Geography & Sustainability

Geography
Sustainability

History

International Studies

Political Science

Public Policy and Administration

Social Science

Sociology

Program:

	NA*	Benchmark	Satisfactory	Exemplary
Outcomes	—	Not aligned with program mission	— Aligned with and specific to the program mission	— Have evolved based on previous assessments
	—	Not measurable	— Clearly measurable	— Are responsive to new information
	—	Outcomes are expressed as statements that include multiple outcomes	— Expressed in language that focuses on what students will be able to demonstrate	
Target	—	Target lacks clear rationale	— Target is clearly stated and has defensible rationale	— Targets are responsive to previous assessments, new information and changing environments
	—		—	— Targets will advance the program and its students
Data Source	—	Data is collected, but not at a consistent point in the program	— Data collected includes work performed near the end of the academic program	— Data is collected from a culminating experience shared by all students
	—	Data collection is post-hoc rather than planned	— Sample is from student representing mode of expected performance	— Sampling is random (for larger programs) or all majors are included (<10 grads per year)
Means of Assessment	—	Does not match outcomes	— Content to be assessed fits outcomes	— Criteria for student work is coordinated among program faculty who contribute
	—	Data collection process not described	— Data collection process is briefly described	— Designed to promote curricular improvement
	—		— Appropriate measures are used	— Rationale is clearly articulated
Means of Scoring	—	Rubric or standards are not attached	— Rubric provided that describes different levels of performance	— Rubric clearly differentiates different levels of performance
	—	Scores are not broken down for analysis (e.g., based on holistic grade)	— Scoring allows for analysis of aspects of student performance	— Reliability is ensured through more than one scorer
Evidence Storage	—	Student work is not retained	— Samples of student work are retained	— Evidence that assessment is used to improve curriculum is publicly available (e.g. published)
	—	Data storage location is not specific	— Data is stored in a specific, identified location so it can be easily located upon request	— 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
	—	Means of scoring was insufficient to enable assessment of outcome	—	— 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	—	Actions not aligned with outcomes sought	— Action plan is developed from findings and is aligned with outcomes sought	— Responsibilities for action are assigned in the report
	—	No improvements described for findings that fail to meet the target	— Clearly describes intended changes and hypothesized improvements	— Target implementation date for action is stated
	—		— Program shows use of assessment results for improvement	— Implement and planned changes are described and linked to assessment data (if no changes are reported, an explanation is provided)
Reporting	—	Annual report was submitted, but was 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
Pacing	—	Assessment records are not complete for the 3-year period (prior, current, following)	— Assessment records are complete for the 3-year period (prior, current, following)	— Report shows continuity with previous reports
	—		—	— All outcomes are assessed annually

*NA: not available for evaluation based on information provided