Summary of Program Learning Outcome Assessment Reporting for Academic Year 2020-21

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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".

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 2021, 58 Programs were expected to submit a 2020-21 Program Learning Outcome Assessment Report (Appendix A). Of those 58 Programs, 93% completed their reports by Dec. 31, 2020. For comparison, the reporting rate for 2018-19 was 65% and the reporting rate for 2019-20 was 70%. Additionally, as of March 15, 2022, only 2 programs had not yet submitted a 2020-21 Program Assessment Report.

Process of Reviewing Program Assessment Reports

In an effort to identify which aspects of program assessment need improvement, for the past three 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. For the past two years I have presented an overview of our assessment practices to the Faculty Senate and I have provided the Program Assessment Coordinators with an overview report of university practices. I have also provided each Program Assessment Coordinator with a written summary of my review of their assessment reports.

Comparison to Past 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.

From 2018-19 to 2019-20, there was widespread improvement in the assessment reporting practices across the university (Table 1). The overall average score increased from 19.6 ± 0.7

(mean ± SEM) to 22.1 ± 0.7. In particular, programs improved in their reporting of where they were storing the assessment evidence and in their descriptions of their planned actions. In 2020-21, the overall scores decreased slightly to 21.5 ± 0.8. However, when comparing only the programs that completed reports in both 2019-20 and 2020-21, the overall scores increased from 22.4 ± 0.6 to 23.0 ± 0.5, although the increase was not statistically significant (paired t-test, n = 31, p = 0.26). While acknowledging that the differences were not statistically significant, and we therefore shouldn't put too much emphasis on the differences, I will speculate that the data suggests that programs which have been consistently reporting on their Program Learning Outcomes are continuing to improve their process and the decrease in scores for all programs from 2019-20 to 2020-21 could paradoxically be due to the improved reporting rate—the programs that *did not* submit reports in 2019-20 submitted reports that scored much lower than programs that *did* submit reports in 2020-21 (18.7 ± 0.8 vs. 23.0 ± 0.5).

Table 1: Average scores for all academic programs that submitted Program Learning Outcome Assessment Reports

	Rubric categories											
	Outcomes	Target	Data Source	Means of Assessment	Means of Scoring	Evidence Storage	Findings	Dissemination	Actions	Reporting	Pacing	Total
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
2020-21 Average	2.0	1.4	2.6	2.0	2.2	1.4	2.0	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.0	21.5

Program Assessment Reporting Strengths and Weaknesses

My assessment of our strengths and weaknesses is similar to my previous reports. 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 are in the reporting of our work.

Goals for 2021-22 and 2022-23 Program Assessment Reporting

For the past two years I have provided feedback to programs that submitted Program Learning Outcome Assessment Reports. Last year I also made an effort to meet individually with all the Program Assessment Coordinators to make sure that they were on track to complete a report for the 2020-21 academic year and that they had a plan in place for the 2021-22 academic year. Based on our improved scores on the assessment rubric as an institution and the improvement in the number of programs that reported their assessment results this year, I think both of those efforts were generally successful. Programs will again receive feedback on their reports this year and I will also attempt to meet with each of the Program Assessment Coordinators again this spring.

Last spring, the Faculty Senate conducted a survey about assessment practices on campus. I presented my summary of the survey in my Assessment Day presentation in the fall, and was invited to a Faculty Senate Executive Committee meeting in November to talk about what actions I was planning to take in light of the survey results. Unfortunately, the meeting with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee was brief, but I am hoping to meet again with the FS Exec

Committee and to present to Faculty Senate before the end of the academic year. The major take-home points from the survey were:

1. Faculty do not like using TK20 for annual Program Learning Outcome Assessment Reports
2. Faculty want more professional development opportunities related to assessment
3. Faculty want reassignment time that is associated with assessment of Program Learning Outcomes
4. A significant minority (44%) of faculty feel that the main purpose of our assessment process is to fulfill accreditation requirements

Realistically, the university is not going to give reassignment time to engage in assessment of student learning. Assessment is the responsibility of all faculty in each academic program, so the bulk of the work should be shared by all faculty. If done well, the work of the Program Assessment Coordinator should only be a couple hours every year. We can't give reassignment time for several hours of work, and we can't give reassignment time to every faculty member on campus in order to assess student learning. Moreover, Programs could do a comprehensive review of student work with several half-day meetings over the course of the academic year. Recognizing that the Faculty Senate did not like my previous proposal of dedicating one day of the academic calendar each term to assessment, this solution would still be the most efficient way to create time for assessment conversations and for the review of student work.

However, in an effort to reduce the reporting burden, I intend to change our reporting deadlines from twice per year to once per year. Currently programs submit their assessment plan for the coming academic year on June 30 and submit their assessment report for the previous academic year on Oct. 31. I plan to make both the plan for the coming year and the report for the past year due on Oct. 31. This should reduce some of the cognitive load on Program Assessment Coordinators and streamline our reporting process.

Regarding professional development, I met with Seyed Shahrokni from Academic Innovation about workshops related to assessment. Prior to our meeting, Academic Innovation had already held several assessment-related workshops, such as:

- Integrating Competency-based/Mastery Learning into Your Course: Using Canvas Outcomes
- Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATS)
- Course Mapping Strategies

In our meeting, we discussed re-running some of the above workshops in the Winter and Spring terms, as well as adding some workshops that address how to incorporate student feedback into courses.

While a majority of faculty recognize that the main purpose of assessment is to improve our programs, it is concerning that 44% see the main purpose as fulfilling accreditation requirements. I will continue to push out the message that the primary goal of our assessment practices is for faculty to answer the following questions about their curriculum:

- Are students learning what the faculty think the students are being taught?
- Are faculty teaching students the right things (skills, content, competencies, etc.)?
- Can faculty improve how they are teaching students?

Recognizing that our last accreditation report by NWCCU was an important reason that we created a more transparent and structured process for assessment of student learning, and that maintaining accreditation is vital to the university, if we're meeting the primary goal of determining whether our students are learning what we think they should learn, then the secondary goal of accreditation will take care of itself.

Lastly, regarding Tk20, while I agree with our faculty about the challenges of the software, there will be a new Associate Provost who oversees assessment when the next reports are due on Oct. 31, 2022. I don't feel that I should promise faculty that we will move away from Tk20. It would be reasonable for the new Associate Provost to continue to use Tk20 rather than inventing a new system when they first arrive; at the same time, if the new Associate Provost wants to leave Tk20 behind, it will give them an easy "win" with faculty.

Appendix A: Academic units considered "Programs" for 2020-21 Program Learning Outcome Assessment Reporting

College of Education

Deaf and Professional Studies
ASL Studies
ASL/English Interpreting
Professional Studies in the Deaf Community
Interpreting Studies
Rehabilitation Counseling

Education and Leadership
Early Childhood Studies
Education Studies (Non-Liscensure)
Instructional Design Certificate
Instructional Design Certificate
Teaching, MA (Secondary)
Education, MSEd
Curriculum and Instruction
Early Childhood Education
Elementary Mathematics Specialist
ESOL
Interdisciplinary Professional Studies
Literacy
Reading Specialist
STEM
Educational Technology, MSEd
Special Education
Undergraduate Teacher Education

Health and Exercise Science
Public 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
Music
Theatre Arts

Criminal Justice
Criminal Justice, MA
Criminal Justice

Computer Science
Computer Science
Computer Science and Mathematics
Information Systems

Humanities
Communication Studies
English Studies
Integrated English Studies Concentration
Linguistics Concentration
Literature Concentration
Writing Concentration
Humanities
Spanish
Philosophy

Natural Science and Mathematics
Biology
Chemistry
Earth and Environmental Science
Mathematics

Organizational Leadership
Organizational Leadership, MA

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

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 *coordinated* 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