Assessment Council on Learning Outcomes Narrative Response to the Spring 2018 assessment report submitted by:

School: School of Arts and Sciences

1. Are learning goals clear and publicly available? Are learning goals aligned; course learning goals aligned with program level learning goals, aligned with school learning goals, aligned with university learning goals?

Meets Current ACLO Standards

The SAS Assessment report indicates that 31/43 departments scored “best practice” for including appropriate learning goals and identifying how those learning goals are met. However, some departments do not include specific program goals. Program learning goals are available online and easy to find. Departments appear to have learning goals posted online as well.

2. Are course syllabi available online? Do they include course and program learning goals?

Meets Current ACLO Standards

Individual department syllabi appear to be posted online but are not collected together and easily accessible. The report does not describe where to find syllabi but does indicate that most departments include learning goals on the syllabi.

3. Is there a description of the program assessment structure and process? Is there a standing faculty committee in place? How often does it meet?

Meets Current ACLO Standards

The assessment process in SAS is overseen by the SAS Assessment Committee and the SAS Office of Undergraduate Education. Each summer, the SAS Assessment Committee requests that each department provide evaluation reports indicating the plan for program assessment, a discussion of how program learning goals are achieved, and an explanation for whether learning goals are sustainably assessed. The committee then provides scores departments as “best practices”, “making good progress”, and “progress stalled.” This process ensures that all programs are annually reviewing the assessment process in a sustainable way.
4. Is the discussion of assessment tools and methods most used by the program adequate? Did the report make clear why those tools and methods were used?

Meets Current ACLO Standards

Departments have done a good job of developing assessment tools and methods. 38 out of 43 departments scored “best practice” for including direct assessment.

5. Are benchmarks or standards used to guide the assessment process made clear? Are they established by a professional assessment body or through comparison with peer programs?

Making Reasonable Progress

Benchmarking across such a vast array of departments is no easy matter. SAS oversees these activities and the assessment report indicates that more than half of all programs scored “best practice” in use of benchmarks for assessment standards.

6. Are successful implementations of assessments made clear? Is the discussion as to how the results are compiled adequate? Is at least one direct assessment measure of a program level goal discussed?

Making Reasonable Progress

The clear majority of departments described successful implementation of direct assessment, and many more included descriptions of indirect assessment. The summary report, however, does not include specific examples from any of the departmental reports.

7. Is there adequate discussion of the successful implementation of change in the curriculum or program under review, based on the results of particular assessments that have been conducted?

Meets Current ACLO Standards

Most departments have developed plans for future program changes based on assessment and made “clear and substantial progress” in closing the loop activities. Furthermore, 16 departments have collected and reported evidence of improved student learning based on previous closing the loop activities.
8. Is the process used to review and update the relevance of the school’s learning goals and the program learning goals within the school clearly explained?

The report lists that “six departments reported reviewing their learning goals based on there assessment efforts,” and that two departments updated those goals. The report does not describe how frequently all departments are expected to review or update course and program learning goals, but it is a fair assumption that the process of updating learning goals is monitored by the SAS Assessment Committee and the Office of Undergraduate Education. It would be helpful in next years report to learn more about the schedule for programs and departments to review and update their learning goals.

Meets Current ACLO Standards

General Comments:

This year, 43 out of 45 departments submitted assessment reports to the SAS Assessment Committee. The two departments that failed to report were asked to submit a midyear report in February. The SAS Assessment Committee scored these individual reports on several criteria and found that nearly all the departments are doing an excellent job of pursuing assessment. In fact, most scores across all criteria were found to be “best practice” models. Overall, 14 SAS departments were designated as best practice models across all checklist items.

SAS is also expanding assessment efforts by encouraging programs that lie outside of academic departments to prepare assessment reports. This year, the SAS Honors Program submitted a report for the first time, and the SAS Assessment Committee expects more such programs to follow suite.

Summative Evaluation: Meets Current ACLO Standards