
School: RU-NB Core Curriculum

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

As is noted at the outset of the report, the Core Curriculum in New Brunswick was revised by faculty vote in May 2017, and those changes are now fully in place for the students entering as of Fall 2019. The changes are explained in detail in the report, but, for our purposes here, it should be noted that The Core Requirements Committee had a lot on its plate to facilitate the new requirements, create appropriate structures, such as learning goals and new rubrics. As for learning goals, these, as has been the case for years, are available publicly on the SAS Undergraduate Education website. These goals are also available to the student within the schedule of classes and the Degree Navigator, which is important as the students plan their path through the Core. The goals are aligned, as expected, providing a coherent structure from the University level, to the Decanal level, to the program level, to the course itself. There are 20 learning goals as of the recent revision of the Core. The learning goals in the Core Curriculum are the general education goals for all of the schools in New Brunswick participating in the core; SAS, SEBS, RBS in New Brunswick, with participation by GSE, SMLR, MGSA, the Bloustein School, SSW, and SC&I. This type of collaboration and cooperation is a marvel and should be lauded repeatedly.

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

Meets Current ACLO Standards

The Core Requirements Committee (CRC) ensures that the syllabi or course synopsis for the core courses contain the appropriate learning goals, both for the Core and for the program and course. These syllabi and synopses are available mostly through departmental means, such as web sites or the course catalogue. Beyond this, the Core goal categories are available within the registration system. Thus, students in NB have a multitude of avenues to reach the Core goals, not just the syllabi of the Core courses themselves.
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 structure for the RU-NB Core Curriculum is comprehensive, consistent and sustainable. The Core Requirement Committee (CRC), which is composed of faculty and staff from the various schools using the Core, and headed by the SAS Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, has operated effectively for years, and continues to do so. The CRC meets frequently, at least once a month, and is continually involved with all aspects of policy for the Core, including assessment plans and methods. Most critically, the CRC demands an assessment plan for each course recommended for including in the Core, thus guaranteeing that assessment is ‘built-in’ to the Core from the start.

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

The discussion of assessment tools and methods used within the Core Curriculum is comprehensive and clear. What is most interesting, though, is the decision to focus most of all on direct assessments of student learning in the Core, embedded into the courses, and evaluated by rubrics created by the CRC. This was done for the simple reason that it is the best method known for assessing general education programs, though it is certainly time intensive and requires a serious commitment by the units participating in the Core. Since those units are the larger undergraduate units in the University, this commitment drives assessment University-wide. The CRC expects that Core courses will be assessed each time they are offered, and asks 1/3 of the departments participating in the Core to present a full assessment report each year.

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?

Meets Current ACLO Standards

As noted above, the CRC follows what is considered to be national best practices in assessing general education when assessing the Core Curriculum. These were determined by years of research and evaluation of the practices at peer institutions and through national higher education organizations, (e.g., AACU, etc.). The benchmark for the Core is truly ‘state of the art’. Within the Core assessment itself, the CRC has set an internal benchmark for determining whether or not students in a Core course have achieved the desired learning outcome, i.e., it is expected that 2/3 of the students completing the course should meet the standard set by the assessed learning goal at
the satisfactory level or beyond. This is typically exceeded when assessments are conducted, and the CRC and the faculty teaching within the Core work to continually improve these outcomes by initiating changes in the courses.

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?**

**Meets Current ACLO Standards**

The Core Curriculum has been operation for eight years as of Ay 2018-2019. This means that two complete three-year cycles of assessment, as described above, have been completed. Direct measures of at more than one Core learning goal are completed every year. Programs offering courses within the Core are asked in these three-year reports to provide a comprehensive review of the cumulative assessment results, information on modifications to courses based on assessments, and any observed changes in student outcomes because of these modifications. That is a complete assessment system; the CRC is the most sustainable and effect assessment system of its kind in the University. It is notable that the CRC has now extended its reach by asking for assessment reports offered in the Summer and Winter sessions. This is an important and meaningful decision, since it insures that all of our students, no matter when they enroll in Core courses, can be assured that the standards to which they are held, are the same. A table is provided showing which programs submitted assessment reports in AY 2018-2019. We are also provided with summary results from the assessments conducted, and it is obvious from those results that the 2/3 threshold mentioned above is exceeded for every goal assessed. This is also true for the table illustrating the cumulative learning goals assessment from 2011 to 2019. Impressive? Beyond doubt.

7. **Was 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**

A summary table is presented showing the increase in modifications in courses over the entire Core Curriculum as times has passed. In other words, the more assessment that is done in the Core, the more the faculty innovate and modify courses to attain the learning goals. Thus, not only has there been successful implementation of change in the curriculum itself, it is very clear form the cumulative data, especially Table 2 and Table 3, that the faculty have become energized and engaged in general education in a way that was just not possible before the created of the Core and its oversight body, the CRC. Table 3 gives examples of the kinds of modifications that have been generated through this entire assessment process. Some examples of successful modifications are given; changes in assignments, changes in pedagogy, such as allowing students to submit repeated drafts of a paper and have individual consultations with faculty. After
implementation of these changes, student performance measurably improved. There are many other examples, but what is most interesting in the report is the realization by the CRC that sharing these examples and stories of student success with the faculty increases faculty engagement with general education and the Core itself, and with assessment. This is laudable.

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?

Meets Current ACLO Standards

The answer to these questions is an emphatic Yes! As noted at the outset of this report, the entire Core Curriculum was reviewed and revised over an extended period, beginning with a special committee created by the Executive Dean of SAS to review the Core nearly four years ago in the summer of 2015. Clarification of the goals and learning outcomes were agreed upon in May 2017, and in May 2018 the requirements for the students were changed, and have now been fully implemented as of Fall 2019. An explanation of the changes that were made, and a complete revised Core Curriculum are presented in the report. It is easy to state that these efforts are not complete, but, the CRC and SASOUE worked diligently since Fall 2018 to bring about all of the necessary changes to make the new requirements effective for the entering class of Fall 2019. This has included not only planning with departments the schedule for offering various Core courses over the next two years or so, but also retiring courses from the Core that departments had no plans to offer. The CRC has also developed new templates for the submission of course to be considered for the Core, and for assessment results. These are both progressive and significant steps forward.

General Comments: The efforts of the Core Requirements Committee and leadership of the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education and the new Director for Teaching, Learning and Assessment are stellar. The quality of the work described in this report is impressive on so many levels it is hard to avoid many accolades in reviewing it. The existence of the RU-NB Core Curriculum itself is a major achievement given the complexity and diversity of disciplines across New Brunswick. But what is just as impressive is the constant, dedicated efforts of so many faculty and staff across New Brunswick that makes the Core Curriculum and its assessment a living organism. It grows, develops and improves, engaging faculty from across New Brunswick, and giving our undergraduates the kind of general education that is critically important and yet increasingly rare in large academic institutions.

Summative Evaluation: Meets Current ACLO Standards