School: NB Core Curriculum

1. Did the NB Core Curriculum report adequately describe any changes made in the past year to the school-wide learning outcome assessment plan or its leadership, and any changes in the program or department-wide learning outcome assessment processes?

The report described the extensive, well-designed and well-functioning learning outcome assessment structure for the New Brunswick Core Curriculum. This structure has been stable for a number of years, since 2018-2019. A key component of this structure is the Core Requirements Committee, which oversees the Core Curriculum and its assessment.

As noted above, the Core Requirements Committee (CRC) oversees all assessment. The CRC is composed of representatives from the various New Brunswick schools involved in the Core Curriculum. It includes three student members. The membership rotates in an organized manner. A list of the 2022-2023 membership of the CRC is provided in an appendix. The report also describes the relatively new narrative review process, through which the CRC sends out assessment results to the participating units, who are then asked to submit a narrative discussing these results and how they will be used by the unit. The CRC then replies with a short feedback letter, offering suggestions and support. This is an exemplary process.

The CRC has also been involved with the Discovery Advantage, a sweeping review of the undergraduate student experience in New Brunswick which is still in process. The CRC also communicates with the undergraduate program directors within SAS. As part of its normal functioning, the CRC reviews the proposal review and revision process within the Core. It has made a number of recommendations to streamline the process, in some cases directly responding to suggestions of the SAS program directors. These are stated in the report. Notable among them is the decision to eliminate the requirement that all online core courses must report learning outcome assessment results each time they are offered. This requirement was enacted during the immediate response to the pandemic when courses were moved online, and is no longer deemed necessary. The report makes clear that the CRC is very responsive to the suggestions of other stakeholders in New Brunswick, providing a well-integrated course proposal and assessment system.
2. Did the NB Core Curriculum report adequately describe any changes made in school-wide learning goals in the past year, and why these changes were made? Please give examples if any program or department wide learning goals were changed, and the reasons for doing so.

The report states that no core-side learning goals were changed in 2022-2023, but that the Discovery Advantage project is discussing creating some specific New Brunswick wide learning goals. Discovery Advantage is working on recommendations to revise the Rutgers University Learning Goals, too. Once new New Brunswick wide learning goals are developed, CRC will be involved in working with the schools to determine how best to assess them. The report also notes the revisions in the Writing Program, i.e., the replacement of Expository Writing with a new College Writing course series, which are intended to provide a more authentic and individualized approach to writing. This new curriculum is available throughout New Brunswick in Fall 2023, and the CRC and the SAS Office of Undergraduate Education, especially the Director of Teaching, Learning and Assessment, will revise the assessment process accordingly. These efforts again illustrate that the CRC’s work is well-integrated into the undergraduate curriculum in New Brunswick.

3. Did the NB Core Curriculum report explain how the unit directly assessed student learning at the school level and the program level? Did the report give at least two examples with evidence from the assessments?

The report states that direct assessment of learning outcomes, through embedded questions and a review of their answers using a rubric, all made available through the CRC. A link within the report provides access to all of the questions and rubrics. As mentioned above, the CRC provides assessment results back to the departments and programs for their use, and initiates a discussion of how the assessment results will be used for improvement.

4. Did the NB Core Curriculum report explain how the unit indirectly assessed student learning at the school level and the program level? Did the report give at least two examples with evidence from the assessments?

The report states that indirect assessments are developed and used by individual instructors. These come to the attention of the CRC through the standard review process, in which the CRC asks instructors how they plan to make modifications based on assessment results, including the quantitative results the CRC sends to the department and programs. Some of this discussion is presented in the report, and in the enclosed department and program narratives.
5. Did the NB Core Curriculum report adequately describe whether or not student performance reached desired learning outcomes during the past year? Did the report provide licensing examinations results, if applicable? Did the report adequately describe how any observed deficits in student learning will be addressed?

The report provides a comprehensive and useful display of assessment results for this past assessment cycle. Some comparisons with past years are also presented and these are interesting and informative. For example, quantitative reasoning dropped from 2020-2021 (88% satisfactory or better) to 2021-2022 (74% satisfactory or better). The most recent cycle, 2022-2023 shows a recovery, (85% satisfactory or better). The report gives examples of how departments and programs responded to the observed decline by making changes to improve student performance, and these seemed to have worked in this case. Again, an exemplary model of how assessment is intended to function.

6. Did the NB Core Curriculum report adequately describe how the results from the unit’s assessments will be used to inform future teaching and curricular revisions?

As noted above, the report provides examples of how departments and programs made adjustments in response to assessment results. Though some of these responses were about general course improvement and not focussed only on Core learning goals and their assessment, the results mentioned above clearly show that these changes helped to improve student performance. The report singles out some specific challenges and changes made by department and programs to improve student performance. One area of great concern, and one of great faculty engagement, is how to accommodate the existence and wide availability of generative artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT. Another is a major effort to improve student writing throughout the curriculum. (This is related to the generative AI issue, too.).

7. Did NB Core Curriculum report any change in the availability of syllabi, and learning goals on school and program or departmental web sites over the past year, and explain any issues with maintenance of these public sites? If there was change, did the report explain why these changes occurred? Did the report provide a link to the unit’s syllabi and learning goals.

The report notes that learning goals are available through a number of mechanisms, including the SAS Office of Undergraduate Education web page, and the Advising and Academic Services web page. No mention is made of course syllabi, but as standard practice, course syllabi would be available in some form on the offering department or program web page.
8. **Did the NB Core Curriculum report include any links describing the unit’s assessment plans and data gathered from its assessments? Did the unit choose to share any additional information about its learning goals and its assessment of learning outcomes, especially any use of alternative assessments conducted to address student learning needs and outcomes?**

The report provides many examples and links to data gathered from assessments, and faculty comments from within the assessment and review process.

**Conclusion:** This is superb report and a model for any core curriculum in the country. The assessment structure for the NB Core Curriculum is organized, effective and, most important of all, in a state of continuous improvement. The massive nature of this effort and the commitment of resources should be recognized, along with the outright success of the entire enterprise.