

Assessment Council on Learning Outcomes (ACLO) Response to the Spring 2017 Learning Outcome Assessment Report submitted by:

Rutgers-New Brunswick Core Curriculum

The RU-NB Core Curriculum administered by the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) continues to set an impressively high standard in the rigor of its design and execution of assessment. It continues to enact a 3-year cycle with roughly 1/3 of departments contributing to the Core reporting in a given year. Having completed two full cycles since implementation in 2011-12, this year's report also addressed longer term prospects for the Core in addition to reporting on data from this academic year. A substantial review of the Core was initiated in 2016 and in May 2017, a set of recommendations was voted upon to continue to revise and strengthen the Core.

Are learning goals clear and publically 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

Learning goals are clearly defined, publicly accessible in multiple places (including on the main page of the SAS Office of Undergraduate Education: <http://sasoue.rutgers.edu/core/core-learning-goals>) and hierarchically aligned.

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

Meets Current ACLO Standards

The Core Requirements Committee (CRC) which oversees the Core has a rigorous system in place for the approval of Core courses. This system includes best practices in syllabi design and integration of Core-specific learning goals into syllabi.

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 CRC continues to develop and implement a state-of-the-art assessment plan, including reporting structures. New systems have been added to streamline the process of reporting data. This year, CRC extended Core-reporting to Winter and Summer sessions. Additionally, the report cites a very highly level of compliance, including voluntary submission of assessment data.

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 CRC has a robust system of rubrics for direct, authentic, and embedded assessment of learning goals. These are detailed in the report.

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 also reported last year, the CRC notes an unrealistically high percentage (75%) of students meeting learning goals at the top, or “outstanding,” level, prompting efforts to further “refine assessment instruments and procedures to better distinguish between levels of student outcomes.” In alignment with accepted best practices, the CRC “has benchmarked Core goal outcomes with an expectation that at least two-thirds of students will meet the assessed goal at the satisfactory or better level.” The Core program has more than met this standard.

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

This year, CRC reports a 94% response rate from courses designated to report (500+) this year and an additional 120 voluntary reports. There is certainly adequate discussion of how results are compiled, and a number of direct assessments are involved in this process.

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

In addition to documenting representative adjustments to the curriculum in individual courses, for example, in Italian and in Latino and Caribbean Studies, the report presents findings from a 2015-16 External Review by a Core Evaluation Committee (CEC). The CEC recommended and the CRC acted on several ongoing changes, including revising the “faculty-facing aspects of the Core Curriculum” including “the combination of goals, the elimination of redundant goals, and changes in goal wording.” The ACLO finds this effort timely and constructive.

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 design of the Core Requirements Committee builds a regular review of the learning goals as into the structure of the core itself. In addition, the activities of the Core Evaluation Committee in addressing issues within the Core Curriculum as discussed above, show that the review process is robust and meaningful in this area.

Meets Current ACLO Standards

General Comments :

The Core Curriculum report is well written and provides access to detailed information about the core curriculum assessment activities. Again, the Core Requirements Committee has maintained and continues to build upon an excellent record of accomplishment in supporting a culture of assessment with an emphasis on direct, authentic, and embedded assessments that nonetheless cross disciplinary and departmental boundaries. The process is robust and sustainable and has set an example across the institution for assessing general learning outcomes. The leadership and members of the CRC should be applauded for sustained excellence in this area.

It is important to note, too, that the Core Evaluation Committee was created by the dean after faculty requested a review of the entire core and its assessment, which lead to a form of assessment of the core assessment process itself. This is ‘closing the loop’ at a very high level, and revealed the robustness and value of the core curriculum, its operation and its methods of learning outcome assessment.

Summative Evaluation: *Meets Current ACLO Standards*