Executive Summary

The School of Arts and Sciences 2021–22 assessment record demonstrates a commitment across the School’s forty-five departments and programs to teaching and learning; to continuous, evidence-based improvement; and, ultimately, to student success.

This year’s reports reflect the ongoing impact of the pandemic. But they also describe a diverse range of authentic assessment efforts that are responsive to the specific challenges, opportunities, and goals of individual SAS departments. In what follows, we have made a particular effort to highlight examples of productive, innovative, and meaningful assessment practices.

Three themes emerged from this year’s reports:

**Widespread concerns about student disengagement, especially in Spring 2022.** In line with nationally reported trends and informal reporting from faculty, several departments noted an increase in students stopping attending or completing work and/or a noticeable decline in participation and motivation among students who did continue attending. While faculty are adopting a wide range of strategies to engage students, it is worth noting that broader external factors like stress and pandemic fatigue seem to be driving this phenomenon—and that those factors are affecting faculty as well as students.

**Student voices encouraging departmental attention to career readiness.** A number of SAS departments used surveys, focus groups, or other means to include student voices in their assessment efforts this year. Along with other feedback, students commonly express interest in career-related topics. The SAS Career Explorations in the Arts and Sciences Initiative is helping departments respond to this interest by developing learning goals and curriculum plans that help students articulate how a Rutgers liberal arts education prepares them to design flexible life and career paths in an uncertain world.

**Assessment as one component of efforts to promote student success.** What comes across most consistently in program assessment reports is how deeply SAS departments care about student success. Assessment is often one component of broad curricular and pedagogical reform efforts that are intended to improve student learning, improve time-to-degree, and prepare students for their careers and lives after Rutgers.

The SAS community has a longstanding and deeply rooted commitment to student success. Undergraduate directors and student support staff across the School meet regularly to build community, discuss the major challenges that departments, students, and instructors are facing, and develop strategies for overcoming those challenges. These efforts will continue as the University works to implement the Academic Master Plan, with a particular focus on student success and timely degree completion with minimal debt.
Introduction

The critical undergraduate education mission of the School of Arts and Sciences is to achieve excellence, create opportunity, and build leadership by providing a high-quality, nationally recognized arts and sciences education to a highly diverse student population. In addition to the SAS Core Curriculum goals, our students will achieve rigorous disciplinary learning goals in major and minor fields of study (or a single credit-intensive major field of study).

Since 2018–19, SAS has implemented an inquiry-oriented framework for program assessment processes and practices. This approach asks departments to identify a question about student learning that they will investigate through the assessment process, explain their methods for investigating that question, and describe their results. Departments are also asked to explicitly connect their assessment process to the ultimate goal of improving student learning, and to explain how they disseminate, analyze, and act on the results they obtain through the assessment.

This process is designed to engage faculty in authentic, meaningful assessment practices by: (1) focusing on the use of assessment results; and (2) providing departments with the flexibility to focus their assessment efforts on areas that they judge to be most important for their programs.

In the SAS Office of Undergraduate Education, the Director of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment and the Senior Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education provide consultations, workshops, resources, and support in accessing institutional data to help departments design and carry out their assessment inquiries.

In February 2022, representatives of 20 SAS departments attended a program assessment workshop in which SAS OUE discussed assessment basics and presented examples of assessment excellence in SAS. Director of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment David Goldman and Senior Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education also consulted with 12 departments.

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2. The Core Curriculum is addressed in a separate annual assessment report submitted to the Assessment Council on Learning Outcomes, the Core Requirements Committee, and the Executive Dean of SAS.

3. This framework resembles the approach highlighted by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment in Jankowski, N. A. (2012). St. Olaf: Utilization-Focused Assessment. NILOA Examples of Good Assessment Practice (pp. 1–9). Retrieved from [http://learningoutcomesassessment.org/CaseStudyStOlaf.html](http://learningoutcomesassessment.org/CaseStudyStOlaf.html)

about their program assessment plans, providing guidance and assisting in collecting additional
data as necessary.

In March 2022, the Assessment Council on Learning Outcomes (ACLO) distributed a revised set
of questions for schools to address in their program assessment reporting. The report below
responds to the ACLO’s questions, drawing from the department-level, inquiry-oriented
assessment reports submitted by SAS departments; it also provides some additional detail and
analysis of assessment efforts and findings within SAS. The reporting form used within SAS is
attached to this report as Appendix A.

The process of reviewing departmental assessment reports within SAS was significantly revised
for the 2021–22 cycle. As detailed in the “Changes to Plans, Leadership, or Processes” section
below, these revisions better align the review of departmental program assessment reports with
the goals and structure of the reports themselves, improve the detail and quality of feedback
provided to departments, and provide more stakeholders with exposure to the range of program-
level assessment processes in SAS.

2021–22 Results

Assessment Council on Learning Outcomes Questions

Changes to Plans, Leadership, or Processes

Describe any changes made in the past year to school-wide learning outcome assessment plans or its
leadership and articulate any changes in program- or department-wide learning outcome assessment
processes. Please explain why any changes were made.

As in past years, assessment processes within the School of Arts and Sciences are led by the SAS
Assessment Committee working with the SAS Director of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment
and the Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education.

For 2021–22, the Assessment Committee implemented several revisions to SAS assessment
processes. In Spring 2022, the Committee developed and shared with departments a new pilot
rubric (Appendix B). This pilot rubric conveys priorities and areas of concern within SAS’s
inquiry-oriented assessment process, better aligns the review of program assessment reports with
the structure of the SAS report template, and improves the detail and quality of feedback
provided to departments.

In Summer 2022, an expanded group of raters, including the Director of Teaching, Learning, and
Assessment, the Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, SAS instructional
designers, and Assessment Committee members, used this rubric to rate departmental assessment
reports. Involving more raters in the process has provided more stakeholders with exposure to
the range of program-level assessment practices in SAS. As one rater from a STEM department
commented, “I didn't really appreciate what was being asked for when I did it [assessment] last
year, which is why I didn't really follow the format. …I have to say [the reports I reviewed] are
pretty impressive. I suppose they’ve built it up over quite a time, but still a lot of work to do
these. Wish I had seen these examples earlier.” Building on feedback like this, the Assessment
Committee plans to request departments’ permission to share exemplary reports with the broader undergraduate education community within SAS.

The results of this rating process are presented and discussed below. Feedback to departments will include individual discursive reviews of each department’s report, prepared by the Director of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment and the Senior Associate Dean, accompanied by the completed pilot rubric. The SAS Assessment Committee also schedules midyear follow-ups with departments that appear to be stalled or in need of support in their assessment efforts.

**Changes to Learning Goals**

*Describe any changes made in school-wide learning goals in the past year, and why such changes were made. Please provide examples if any program- or department-wide learning goals were changed, and the reasons for doing so.*

There were no changes made at the school level this year. At the program level, a handful of departments made changes. For instance, French revised its program learning goals in parallel and in coordination with the overhaul of their major. Drawing on input from students as well as faculty, the department developed new learning goals that advanced a major overhaul that “emphasized skills rather than course content or language of instruction.”

As noted under “Learning Goals and Curriculum” below, relatively few departments in SAS update their learning goals each year. In general, we do not expect a high rate of revision of learning goals in SAS, where many disciplinary contexts change slowly relative to the annual program assessment cycle.

**Measured Changes in Student Performance**

*Describe any measured changes in student performance in achieving desired learning outcomes during the past year. Describe which assessment results were used to motivate the changes, especially results from direct assessment of student learning. If applicable to your unit, please include licensing examination results. Please describe how these measured changes will be addressed, either through efforts to improve any declines that have been detected, or to build upon any improvements noticed.*

The 39 reports received from SAS departments this year describe a wide variety of changes in student learning at the program level, and a similarly wide range of efforts to address these changes. Although it is impossible to summarize all of those changes here (the “Additional Detail on SAS Assessment Efforts and Findings” section below contains additional examples), two trends are particularly worth highlighting:

- Consistent with widely reported national trends, a number of departments reported marked declines in student motivation and engagement in 2021–22, especially in the spring semester. This manifested in an increase in the number of students who simply stopped attending or completing work and a noticeable decline in participation and

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motivation among students who did continue attending. In Fall 2022, the SAS Office of Undergraduate Education organized a panel discussion of these issues. Featuring panelists from Asian Languages and Cultures, Chemistry, and History discussing their experiences with this issue and their strategies for addressing it, the panel was attended by 43 participants. In the words of one participant, this event provided the opportunity for “hearing that other instructors were facing the same issues that I was seeing, and hearing about the strategies that they are trying to implement.” While faculty are attempting a wide range of strategies to increase student engagement, it is worth noting that many of the drivers of this phenomenon seem to come from broader external factors like stress and pandemic fatigue—and that those factors are affecting faculty as well as students. This is illustrated in the following quote from a departmental report, written from the perspective of the Undergraduate Director:

The pandemic continues to pose significant challenges to student learning. In particular, issues of attendance, anxiety as well as other mental health challenges, and physical health have seemingly undermined student motivation and focus. This impact was reflected most clearly in the assessment of Research Methods. It was also communicated by several professors in their email messages to me. This suggests that faculty should also consider novel pedagogical approaches that take these circumstances into account. This may include using a more didactic approach in teaching core concepts featuring power point presentations and straight forward frameworks, lacking critical nuance that would be appreciated under different circumstances. This may also mean an ad hoc hybrid approach that allows students who do not attend class to participate virtually. …There is enough to indicate that it also impacted the faculty, as several were unable to complete their assessments at all, and others replied that various obstacles interfered with their participating in the assessment process.

• A number of SAS departments gathered input from their students about program learning goals and program assessment this year, with students in several departments expressing a particular interest in connecting what they learn in their programs with their careers. Students often frame this as a narrow desire to know what jobs they can get with a particular major. Through the Career Explorations in the Arts and Sciences Initiatives, SAS encourages departments to think more broadly about developing a range of career readiness competencies in students. These include the ability to translate academic skills and knowledge into career-relevant language that employers understand; readiness to design flexible life and career paths in an uncertain world; and the self-awareness to recognize one’s own unique strengths, values, and goals. Supporting these competencies at the departmental level, the Career Explorations Initiative offers discipline-specific Career Explorations courses in partnership with Biological Sciences, Political Science, and Cognitive Science. In response to increased interest in this area, the Career Explorations Initiative is also working with the SAS Director of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment to develop workshops about integrating career readiness skills into departmental learning goals and curricula.
Availability of Syllabi and Learning Goals

Has the availability of syllabi and learning goals on school, program, and/or departmental web sites been maintained over the past year? If not, please provide an explanation.

Yes. As in prior years, all SAS departments and programs have developed and published programmatic learning goals, and these learning goals are available on department web pages and in the official catalog. All department learning goals align with both University and Core learning goals and ensure that SAS students achieve rigorous disciplinary training in major and minor fields of study (or a single credit-intensive major field of study).

Additional Detail on SAS Assessment Efforts and Findings

Reports Received

39 of 45 departments or programs in SAS filed comprehensive assessment reports this year. Concerningly, there are more nonreporting departments than last year, including two medium-to-large SAS departments. As we have seen with students, national reporting has indicated that faculty, staff, and administrators across higher education are experiencing exhaustion and burnout. In this context, the SAS Assessment Committee is making particular efforts to convey to departments the importance of adopting sustainable assessment plans that produce useful information without overtaxing departmental resources or being overly reliant on a single individual. The Assessment Committee also scaffolds the reporting process for nonreporting departments, requesting that they file the first half of their 2022–23 reports in early 2023 to ensure that assessment efforts remain on track. The SAS Office of Undergraduate Education is also reaching out to these departments to offer extensive direct support to help get their assessment efforts back on track.

In January 2022, the SAS Assessment Committee received mid-year reports from four departments that had been asked to submit mid-year assessment reports for 2021–22. These mid-year reports described thoughtful planning for 2021–22 assessment efforts. Those four departments’ final 2021–22 assessment reports were rated an average of 2.5 out of 3 across all categories (on the rubric scale described below), reflecting thoughtful engagement in high-quality, useful assessment efforts.

Sustainability of Assessment Process

Rating scale:
Best practices…3.0
Good progress…2.0
Progress slow or stalled…1.0

Best practices in sustainability:

An appropriately sized assessment committee (given the size of the department or program) exists; similar assessment efforts can realistically be repeated in future years, even with changes in UGD or other important staff.

**Summary**: The program assessment rubric piloted this year emphasizes the importance of sustainability in assessment processes. The small number of departments rating lower than best practices in this category received that rating because program assessment was solely dependent on the undergraduate director (except in very small departments, where such an arrangement is reasonable) or a disproportionately small committee (for larger departments).

**Learning Goals and Curriculum**

Rating scale:
- Best practices…3.0
- Good progress…2.0
- Progress slow or stalled…1.0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAS Average</th>
<th>“Best practices” departments (score ≥2.5)</th>
<th>Best Practices:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>38/39</td>
<td>Program learning goals are included in the department’s assessment report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>30/39</td>
<td>Overwhelming majority of syllabi include learning goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>28/39</td>
<td>Clear mapping of learning goals (or levels of learning goal mastery) to courses or curricular requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>(Optional) Learning goals were updated or revised; process for doing so is inclusive of department faculty, students, and other stakeholders as appropriate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**: As mentioned under “Availability of Syllabi and Learning Goals” above, all SAS departments and programs have developed and published programmatic learning goals, and these learning goals are available on department web pages and in the [official catalog](#). One department neglected to include learning goals on its program assessment report this year, while a small minority of departments do not include appropriate learning goal statements on the
overwhelming majority of their syllabi. The SAS Assessment Committee is strongly encouraging departments to take these simple steps toward improving communication and transparency.

Relatively few departments in SAS update their learning goals each year. In general, we do not expect a high rate of revision of learning goals in SAS, where many disciplinary contexts change slowly relative to the annual program assessment cycle. However, we do encourage departments to view their learning goals as an integral part of their undergraduate curriculum and to include reflection on learning goals when they engage in other curricular development efforts. The SAS Office of Undergraduate Education also consults with and supports departments interested in revising or updating their learning goals.

**Assessment Question**

Rating scale:
Best practices...3.0
Good progress...2.0
Progress slow or stalled...1.0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAS Average</th>
<th>“Best practices” departments (score ≥2.5)</th>
<th>Best practices:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>33/39</td>
<td>Question being investigated is likely to yield information that could be used to improve student learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary:** SAS’s inquiry-oriented approach to program assessment asks departments to begin with a question about student learning that the department would find *useful* for improving student learning. 85% of departments demonstrated best practices in this category this year, up from 70% of departments demonstrating best practices on the equivalent category last year. This improvement is due to a variety of efforts and circumstances in different departments; the SAS Office of Undergraduate Education continues to emphasize the importance of making assessment a useful process, and to support departments in developing assessment questions that respond to their specific concerns.

In reviewing department assessment reports this year, we also noticed an encouraging increase in the number of assessment questions that were specifically focused on departments’ circumstances or concerns rather than more general (and potentially less useful) questions.

Asian Languages and Cultures focused their assessment efforts (across three major programs, in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) on student motivation and engagement:

In particular, instructors expressed serious concern about the level and quality of student engagement, and while student motivation is difficult to measure and assess, we nonetheless thought it worthwhile to explore this subject. For this purpose, we chose to focus on language courses since they provide a large sample pool and involve extensive
student participation… each program reported different issues. For the Chinese program, the main concern was student performance in "high-stake summative assessments." The Japanese program reported a similar concern, adding that the issue may lie in the move towards non-mnemonic (open-book) testing methods of the online environment during the pandemic and the students' struggle to return to close-book testing. The Korean program reported a general concern regarding students' ability to complete assignments and prepare for exams outside of the classroom, stating that "it seemed as if the students did not know how to prioritize and keep up with schoolwork in general."… Another measure taken by our language programs to motivate students was that of giving students more autonomy in terms of assignments. This most often meant project-based assignments where students can use their creativity and engage in issues relating to their interests. Other measures included updating course material to introduce more real life language to students early on so that they can make an easier connection between their language learning in the classroom and the use of language in the real world.

Physics and Astronomy assessed the impact of reforms to General Physics introduced in prior years, finding that the reforms had succeeded in improving student learning:

In AY 2018-19 the format of the recitations in General Physics was transformed from traditional recitations (instructor at blackboard) to workshop format (student centric, group problem solving). …the recitations with group problem solving reduced DFW rates, increased the percentage of students getting As and Bs, and improved the average grades of students in this course.

The department also analyzed SIRS feedback on this change:

Pre-intervention, students’ perceptions varied from one recitation instructor to another since there were minimal overall guidelines for how instructors would host their recitations or even the quiz they would give. However, post-intervention, with uniform guidelines for content of recitation activities and quizzes, not only was there less variability between sections, but overall, the students had very positive perceptions, close to the perfect 5.0.

Physics and Astronomy (P&A) is using these findings to inform future plans for Introductory Physics for Life Sciences (IPLS) course offerings:

This assessment of General Physics is part of the broader effort to reexamine the IPLS offerings to understand how to better serve the students and their major and preprofessional goals. In this effort we are drawing upon the existing body of research and evidence-based instruction practices associated with IPLS curricula. In Fall 2022 the P&A UGS will be drafting recommendations to the P&A faculty and upon approval will submit to SAS Curriculum Committee for consideration. This 2022 assessment of General Physics will be part of the baseline to assess the efficacy of any future changes.

From close engagement with emergent issues to validating recent reforms in order to inform next steps, we view these assessment efforts as an indication that departments in SAS are increasingly
viewing program assessment as a *substantively meaningful* process, rather than a compliance-focused requirement.

**Methods of Assessment**

Rating scale:
Best practices…3.0  
Good progress…2.0  
Progress slow or stalled…1.0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAS Average</th>
<th>“Best practices” departments</th>
<th>Best practices:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>33/39</td>
<td>Investigation involves directly assessing student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>13/21</td>
<td><em>Optional:</em> Indirect assessment strategies (e.g., surveys of instructors about what’s working in their teaching) are well-designed to provide information that could be used to improve student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>25/39</td>
<td>Methods used are appropriate to the question being asked and involve appropriate structure (e.g., rubrics, instruments, etc.)—within reason given the context (e.g., size of department, resources available, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>28/39</td>
<td>Report includes samples of any relevant rubrics, prompts, instruments, etc.</td>
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</table>

**Summary:** The SAS Assessment Committee regards engaging in some form of direct assessment as the baseline expectation for any SAS department, and almost 85 percent of departments did so this year. Departments that did not will be offered additional support in developing assessment plans and asked to provide a mid-year report detailing their plans to engage in direct assessment in 2022–23.

As in previous years, a number of SAS departments engaged in various forms of indirect assessment to complement their direct assessment activities. Examples of indirect assessment include:

**Soliciting Feedback from Students**

In addition to directly assessing students’ achievement of the learning goals in courses that students take in their junior or senior year, the department of Geography held loosely-structured meetings with groups of Geography and Environmental Studies students to learn about the students’ general satisfaction with the program. As they summarize in their report:
The meetings with Geography and ENVS students revealed the following: a) The students did recognize that their coursework covered the program learning goals for both Geography and Environmental Studies. The Geography students suggested improving the wording of some learning goals to make them more understandable. Environmental studies students requested better website resources for course planning, while Geography students asked for better resources to find internships and jobs. Geography students want more career explorations embedding in existing Geography courses, and more hands-on field methods courses. The Environmental Studies students found the Environmental studies seminar course to be a transformative experiential learning experience where they were able to integrate the many perspectives of the major.

The Africana Studies department conducted both a student survey and a student focus group this year. The department received a rich trove of student feedback and is responding with a variety of initiatives, including: ongoing curricular revisions; improving website and social media communications; publicizing the department’s Honors Program; and working with department alumni to compile and promote information about the contributions an Africana Studies major or minor makes to specific careers.

At the same time, they note challenges in responding to students’ feedback:

…in some cases, we have courses on the books that students want (e.g. literature, community involvement) but are not being taught due to lack of instructors….many needed changes cannot occur without more resources - such as having full time instructors to offer courses during the day.

A number of SAS departments conduct regular surveys of their graduating seniors. The Department of Cell Biology and Neuroscience, for example, asks their graduating seniors to complete an exit survey, which collects student feedback about learning goal achievement from the student perspective, effectiveness of the CBN curriculum, and professional goals and feelings of preparedness. This year’s survey resulted in a wealth of feedback and plans for further action shared in the department’s assessment report.

For instance:

When the respondents are broken down by whether they did research (see Table 2), it is clear that students who did undergraduate research were more likely to feel that they met goals 2 and 3, as well as feeling that they could communicate science both in writing and orally. This further indicates the importance of a research experience as a tool in helping students acquire analytic, problem solving, and communication skills.

… Last year and this year students commented on the surveys that there were very few advanced courses or electives in the general field of neurobiology, and that the major would be improved by adding more courses. Since a large proportion of our students enter the major because of an interest in neurobiology, the Curriculum Committee agreed that this would be desirable. Teaching assignments for a number of courses have been rearranged to allow faculty in the area of neurobiology, especially junior faculty, time to develop and implement new courses in neurobiology to expand our offerings. Several courses are in the process of
development, and we hope to add new courses over the next two years.

Expanding faculty involvement in assessment

Departments are strongly encouraged to include faculty in each stage of the assessment process, from initial conceptualization, to data collection, to the interpretation of the results and discussions about how these results can be used. Given the tremendous variation in the size and composition of our departments in SAS, it is not surprising that the form and extent of faculty involvement in assessment processes also varies widely. A few examples from this year’s program assessment reports illustrate some of the ways that departments involved faculty in their 2021-2022 assessment processes.

The Department of Religion developed an assessment tool for their online courses that included a questionnaire, adapted from *The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Handbook for Peer Evaluation of Online and Blended Courses*, to help faculty identify and measure their use of “best practices” for online learning in their teaching. The results of this survey will form the basis for dialogue about best practices in the department:

One of the most challenging areas of adaptation for online courses involved the utilization of a variety of means of evaluation and avoidance of an overreliance on quizzes and exams. …we are experimenting with different ways to encourage dialogue between instructors re: assessment, and this should provide opportunities…to discover different strategies, beyond quizzes and exams, for encouraging student engagement and learning in an online environment.

…[M]id-semester surveys can be esp. important for asynchronous online courses where it’s easier for students to fall off the radar. While we saw a small uptick in the percentage of courses that utilized such tools in the spring compared to the fall, we plan to encourage this practice among faculty and will include model questions for such mid-semester evaluations as part of the Canvas site mentioned in the final section.

The Department of Linguistics has developed a particularly clear structure for regularly involving the department’s Curriculum Committee as well as the full faculty in all aspects of the assessment process. In the spring, the Curriculum Committee determines the assessment question for the following academic year, and the Undergraduate Program Director (UPD) shares program assessment results with the Curriculum Committee for feedback before submitting the departmental report to SAS. The UPD then shares the target assessment question for the upcoming academic year with instructors. In the fall, the UPD reminds instructors about that year’s assessment question, the full faculty sets aside time during a faculty meeting to discuss the state of the department’s undergraduate curriculum, and the UPD distributes the program assessment and SAS feedback from the previous year for the full faculty to review.

Assessment Findings

Rating scale:
Best practices…3.0
Good progress…2.0
Progress slow or stalled…1.0

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<tr>
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<th>“Best practices” departments</th>
<th>Best practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>23/39</td>
<td>Findings are presented with sufficient detail to enable an informed analysis of the department’s interpretation and plans for use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>27/39</td>
<td>Interpretation of findings is reasonable</td>
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**Summary:** This category provides feedback for departments about the level of detail they included when describing the assessment findings in their reports. Averages for this rubric category are lower than for any other rubric category. The Assessment Committee added this category to the pilot rubric to convey to SAS departments the importance of providing adequate detail in their assessment reports. Feedback to departments in this category will emphasize that providing minimal detail about assessment results (e.g., “student writing improved this year,” without further elaboration) limits the Assessment Committee’s ability to provide feedback, constructive suggestions, or referrals to additional university resources. We expect that departments will not find it challenging to provide additional information and improve their scores in this category in future years.

**Plans for Use of Assessment Results**

Rating scale:
Best practices…3.0
Good progress…2.0
Progress slow or stalled…1.0

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>28/39</td>
<td>Department is making reasonable plans to respond to findings (including plans to disseminate best practices or stay the course, in response to positive findings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>12/12</td>
<td><em>Optional:</em> Assessment efforts follow up on prior year’s assessment investigations or curricular/pedagogical/etc. changes initiated in prior years</td>
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**Summary:** SAS departments continue to engage in evidence-based improvements of their instruction. (No departments were rated at the lowest “progress stalled, disrupted, or unclear”
level in either of these categories.) Departments’ plans for how they will respond to their assessment results vary widely, which is appropriate given the diversity in assessment approaches and findings. Some notable examples include:

The Department of Spanish and Portuguese outlined a range of modifications they plan to discuss with all faculty members and instructors in the fall semester:

- **Modifications for future [Spanish & Portuguese] courses in Linguistics include:**
  - Incorporation of specific exercises that target the use of technical vocabulary used in class
  - Shorter in-class writing prompts
  - Additional scholarly literature written in Spanish
  - Continued use of new terminology germane to the field during class sessions to facilitate students’ familiarity with these concepts and their usage

- **Modifications for future [Spanish & Portuguese] courses in Literature include:**
  - Assign keeping of a vocabulary diary on a Google doc to raise students’ awareness of the correct word usage. Have students include a section in their diary that list words that have been flagged in their writing to avoid repeating the same mistakes.
  - Assign shorter essays with a focus on vocabulary before the final project
  - Use Discussions on CANVAS for interactive practice with key vocabulary
  - Distribute a list of important critical terminology for analysis at the beginning of the term
  - Have students produce a list of antonyms and synonyms
  - Use an application like Kahoot to create activities (questions and quizzes) in which heritage speakers can improve their tendency to use colloquial terms in formal settings and second language learners can become aware of their tendency to use false cognates.

- **Modifications for future [Spanish & Portuguese] courses in Translation and Interpreting:**
  - Using close readings in class as a way to help students to understand how to properly use online dictionaries and how to craft idiomatic writing by using available online resources
  - Include more time for in-class writing prompts
  - Keep producing translation drafts that will help them work on the final translations for their portfolios
  - Keep researching terminology in their field of interest

The Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies described the following actionable findings from their assessment efforts, which focused on final presentations in a senior seminar:

1) The quality of students’ analysis of gender as a form of power—vs identity or stereotype—was generally high. Projects framed gender/motherhood as an institution and/or set of cultural practices that has large consequences on the everyday lives of women and families.
2) Projects drew on research, but much of it was dated, often relying on important feminist work from the 1980s. The outside research also varied dramatically from student to student; some completed significant work while others rely on few sources. The senior seminar would benefit from a clearer pedagogical model of teaching students to find and assess relevant current research and establishing parameters for quantity of sources.

3) This [demonstrated ability to differentiate between competing feminist theories/frameworks] was the weakest area as assessed by the rubric. More than half the students displayed only adequate ability to differentiate between relevant frameworks and theories. Only about 1/3 selected highly appropriate lenses to interpret their material.

4) Students generally did a good/great job of connecting gender to other forms of power, especially institutions and phenomena, such as violence. The projects did not generally take an intersectional approach to power, however, such as linking gender to race/sexuality/economics. Given that intersectionality is meant to be a key learning goal of the department, there is room for significant improvement in this area.

The department shared these findings in a syllabus workshop held in May 2022 for all summer instructors and in a full faculty meeting in Fall 2022. The Department’s Undergraduate Director also led a departmental brainstorming session about how to address items (2), (3), and (4) throughout their curriculum—aiming to improve students’ skills and knowledge in these areas before they arrive in the capstone seminar used for assessment purposes.

Conclusion

As the examples above demonstrate, assessment practices in SAS are an important tool for maintaining excellence in undergraduate education and promoting a culture of continuous improvement based on evidence. SAS emphasizes sustainable, authentic assessments that provide valid practical information which is used to inform decision-making about how to improve student learning outcomes.

This year, we have made a special effort to showcase the diversity, range, and impact of departmental assessment efforts in SAS. As the Rutgers–New Brunswick Academic Master Plan is implemented and the entire institution redoubles its focus on student success, SAS departments’ engagement in assessment efforts helps make them well-prepared to contribute to those efforts in a multiplicity of ways.

Submitted on behalf of the SAS Assessment Committee by

Sharon Bzostek, Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education

David Goldman, Director of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

SAS Assessment Committee, 2022–23
Linnea Dickson, Psychology
Mary Emenike, Chemistry & Chemical Biology
Åsa Rennermalm, Geography
Appendix A: Program Assessment Form

2021–22 SAS Program Assessment Report

Due 6/15/2022 • Submit via e-mail to assess-committee@sas.rutgers.edu

Please see sasoue.rutgers.edu/program-assessment/guidelines for more information.

Department: ________________________________

Program(s): _______________________________

Submitted by: _____________________________ Date: ______________

Assessment Committee
Members: ________________________________

Learning Goals

In this space, please list your program’s learning goals and provide the url where they are posted on your website.

Are learning goals on syllabi?

How many department/program syllabi include appropriate learning goal statements? (Select one)

Overwhelming majority | More than half | About half | Less than half

Where are program learning goals achieved?

In this space, please indicate where in your program students achieve mastery of your learning goals: for each goal, identify which course, group of courses, or other curricular requirement most directly supports student mastery of that goal.

What question about student learning did your department investigate this year?

In this space, please state the question about student learning that your department investigated this year.

Your question should be useful—answering it should help to inform your department's decisions about curriculum design, instructional practices, student advising, or other factors.
that impact student learning—and answering it should involve directly examining student learning.

The SAS Assessment Committee’s first priority is ensuring that assessment provides departments with useful information. For guidelines and examples of useful assessment questions, please visit sasoue.rutgers.edu/program-assessment/guidelines or contact SAS Director of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment David Goldman at dgoldman@sas.rutgers.edu.

What methods did you use to answer your question about student learning?

In this space, please provide a brief overview of the way your department gathered information about student learning to answer the question posed above. Be sure to include a description of the student work that was examined and include any prompts, rubrics, or other instruments that you used.

Findings

In this space, please summarize your findings and your interpretation of your findings.

Please briefly explain how your department has used, or plans to use, the information collected.

In this space, please briefly describe how the assessment results were shared, or will be shared, with the faculty in your department. Then identify your department’s next steps and the timeframe during which your department expects to take its next steps.
# Appendix B: Pilot Assessment Report Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
<th>Making Good Progress</th>
<th>Progress stalled, disrupted, or unclear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>An appropriately sized assessment committee (given the size of the department or program) exists; similar assessment efforts can realistically be repeated in future years, even with changes in UGD or other important staff</td>
<td>Some concerns that sustaining assessment effort in future years may be challenging</td>
<td>Assessment effort is solely dependent on undergraduate director (except in extremely small departments or programs), or is unlikely to be sustainable in future years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Goals and Curriculum</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program learning goals</td>
<td>Program learning goals are provided</td>
<td>Program learning goals not provided</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning goals on syllabi</td>
<td>Overwhelming majority of syllabi include learning goals</td>
<td>Majority of course syllabi include learning goals</td>
<td>≤ half of course syllabi include learning goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning goal mapping to curriculum</td>
<td>Clear mapping of learning goals (or levels of learning goal mastery) to courses or curricular requirements</td>
<td>Goals are clearly met within program, but specific mapping is unclear or incomplete</td>
<td>Not clear where or if learning goals are met in curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional: Learning goal maintenance (if applicable)</td>
<td>Learning goals were updated or revised; process for doing so is inclusive of department faculty, students, and other stakeholders as appropriate</td>
<td>Learning goals were updated or revised; process is unclear or limited in scope</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Potential for yielding actionable information</td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Appropriateness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question being investigated is likely to yield information that could be used to improve student learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question being investigated may yield information useful for improving student learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection between the question being investigated and improving student learning is unclear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Direct assessment</td>
<td>Optional: Indirect assessment (if applicable)</td>
<td>Appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation involves directly assessing student learning</td>
<td></td>
<td>Indirect assessment strategies (e.g., surveys of instructors about what’s working in their teaching) are well-designed to provide information that could be used to improve student learning</td>
<td>Methods used are appropriate to the question being asked and involve appropriate structure (e.g., rubrics, instruments, etc.)—within reason given the context (e.g., size of department, resources available, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indirect assessment strategies may provide useful information</td>
<td>Indirect assessment strategies are not likely to provide useful information</td>
<td>Methods used may address the question being asked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No direct assessment of student learning</td>
<td></td>
<td>Methods used do not address the question being asked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supplementary materials</strong></td>
<td>Report includes samples of any relevant rubrics, prompts, instruments, etc.</td>
<td>Report does not include samples of relevant materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Findings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Completeness</strong></td>
<td>Findings are presented with sufficient detail to enable an informed analysis of the department’s interpretation and plans for use</td>
<td>Generalizations about findings are reported, with minimal supporting detail</td>
<td>No findings reported, or only broad conclusions (e.g., “student writing improved this year”) without explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpretation</strong></td>
<td>Interpretation of findings is reasonable</td>
<td>Interpretation is unclear or unsupported by the reported findings</td>
<td>No interpretation of findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plans for use</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plans</strong></td>
<td>Department is making reasonable plans to respond to findings (including plans to disseminate best practices or stay the course, in response to positive findings)</td>
<td>Department’s plans for response are unclear or not responsive to their findings</td>
<td>No plans for response</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Optional:**

**Multi-year assessment efforts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment efforts follow up on prior year’s assessment investigations or curricular/pedagogical/ etc. changes initiated in prior years</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix C: Percent of SAS Departments at Each Level on Checklist Rubric, 2021-2022

Percent of SAS Departments (N=45) at Each Level on Checklist Rubric, 2021-2022

- 3 = Exemplary
- 2.5 = Very Good Progress
- 2 = Making good Progress
- 1.5 = Making some progress
- 1 = Needs to make progress
- NA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GENERAL Sustainability</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING GOALS AND CURRICULUM</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program learning goals</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning goals on syllabi</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning goal mapping to curriculum</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional: Learning goal maintenance (if applicable)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for yielding actionable information</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHODS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct assessment</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional: Indirect assessment (if applicable)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary materials</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINDINGS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completeness</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLANS FOR USE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional: Multi-year assessment efforts</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>