

## ASSESSMENT REPORT

### Master of Arts in Professional Communication

#### ACADEMIC YEAR 2019 - 2020

##### I. LOGISTICS

---

1. Please indicate the name and email of the program contact person to whom feedback should be sent (usually Chair, Program Director, or Faculty Assessment Coordinator).

David Ryan  
Academic Director and Faculty Chair  
Master of Arts in Professional Communication Program  
Certificate in Professional Communication Program  
101 Howard St., Suite 207  
SF, CA  
1-415-422-5524 | ryand@usfca.edu

2. Please indicate if you are submitting report for (a) a Major, (b) a Minor, (c) an aggregate report for a Major & Minor (in which case, each should be explained in a separate paragraph as in this template), (d) a Graduate or (e) a Certificate Program

This report is an aggregate report for MAPC, a graduate program, and our Certificate in Professional Communication program.

3. Please note that a Curricular Map should accompany every assessment report. Has there been any revisions to the Curricular Map since October 2019?

No changes have been made. Our Curricular Map is attached to this report.

## II. MISSION STATEMENT & PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

---

1. Were any changes made to the program mission statement since the last assessment cycle in October 2019? Kindly state “Yes” or “No.” Please provide the current mission statement below. If you are submitting an aggregate report, please provide the current mission statements of both the major and the minor program.

**Mission Statement (Graduate):**

No changes were made to the Mission Statement.

**MAPC Mission Statement:**

The Master of Arts in Professional Communication (MAPC) program provides students with theoretical grounding and practical experiences to apply rhetorical and ethical communication concepts needed to succeed in a range of professions, including organization, industry, business, and academic communities.

This mission statement and PLOs were vetted late Fall 2016 and early spring 2017 by the MAPC Steering Committee and were submitted on 3/31/17.

**Certificate in Professional Communication (CPC)**

Program Mission Statement:

The Certificate in Professional Communication program provides students with the practical experiences to apply rhetorical, ethical, and communication concepts needed to succeed in a range of professions, including organization, industry, business, and academic communities.

2. Were any changes made to the program learning outcomes (PLOs) since the last assessment cycle in October 2019? Kindly state “Yes” or “No.” Please provide the current PLOs below. If you are submitting an aggregate report, please provide the current PLOs for both the major and the minor programs.

No changes were made to the mission statement.

**PLOs (Graduate):**

MAPC Program Learning Outcomes (PLO): Our four PLOs are:

- Core Knowledge: graduate students will define, identify, and apply the rhetorical conventions and strategies appropriate to communicating effectively and ethically to varied audiences;
- Scholarly Communication: graduate students will write and edit a substantial amount of revised prose, meeting standards and applying conventions defined by the field of communication;
- Professionalism: graduate students will produce written, oral and digital communication of high quality consistent with their professional concentration and focus;
- Research: graduate students will conduct skilled and ethical research in the field of communication and contribute original knowledge in their chosen industry and profession.

**PLOs (Certificate):**

These PLOs were reviewed, revised, and submitted by the MAPC Steering Committee in Spring 2017.

CPC Program Learning Outcomes:

- Core Knowledge: students will define, identify, and apply the rhetorical conventions and strategies appropriate to communicating effectively and ethically to varied audiences;
- Professionalism: students will produce written, oral and digital communication of high quality consistent with their professional concentration and focus.

**3. State the particular Program Learning Outcome(s) you assessed for the academic year 2019-2020. PLO(s) being assessed (Graduate):**

After assessing the first three PLOs in the three previous years, we decided to assess PLO #4 for 2019-20:

- PLO #4: Research: graduate students will conduct skilled and ethical research in the field of communication and contribute original knowledge in their chosen industry and profession.

**PLO(s) being assessed (Certificate):**

Similar to previous years, we decided not to assess the certificate program because we are gathering data. Thus far, we have had four certificate students graduate from this program. We are waiting to graduate five students before assessing their work. Next year, we should have our fifth graduate.

**4. Describe the methodology that you used to assess the PLO(s). For example, “the department used questions that were inputted in the final examination pertaining directly to the <said PLO>. An independent group of faculty (not teaching the course) then evaluated the responses to the questions and gave the students a grade for responses to those questions.”**

**Methods used (Graduate).**

Last year’s Annual Review initiated a two-part, multi-year review of capstone projects. For Pt. 1 last year, the review committee examined 20 capstone oral presentations in relation to PLO #3 (Professional Presentation). For Pt. 2 this year, the review committee chose the written capstones to relate to PLO #4. Our review focuses on answering this general exploratory inquiry: "what does research look like in MAPC?"—as this question relates to the written capstones.

Program Context: MAPC focuses on work-related communication, and our program has three concentrations that produce a plurality of communication-focused capstones. These capstone variances mean students use multiple research methods and methodologies, such as those that are steeped in humanities and those from the social sciences. Because written capstone projects are more substantial and substantive than other kinds of graduate papers, the Steering Committee opted to divide our inquiry this year into two parts: the first step involves a data filtration review that uses content analysis to explore and take inventory of the technical and ethical, research-related choices, including choice of style guides, types of quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods of data collection, and different analytical (methodological) approaches. This inquiry helps the committee understand the ethics of technical choices (such as formatting and citation practices) and the components related to research methods and methodologies in relation to PLO #4.

The second step involves reading capstones for their argumentative content using the IDMU codes. This second step will occur at a future date to be determined by the MAPC Steering Committee.

For our review this year, the Steering Committee chose 30 artifacts from our first three cohorts for the data filtration process. Names were redacted and the artifacts were coded anonymously. To establish inter-rater reliability (IRR), raters (MAPC faculty and staff) composed, discussed and revised a draft of the rating form (Appendix A); thereafter, the trainer used a student *exemplar* and had the raters usability test the Google Form document and entered one-to-one data to compare responses. This comparison permits the norming process to achieve consensus and establish IRR.

Thereafter, the 30 artifacts were placed in a secured USF-based cloud system for readers to conduct a double-blind review among six administrative and faculty raters. The data collection process lasted about two weeks.

#### IV. RESULTS & MAJOR FINDINGS

**What are the major takeaways from your assessment exercise? This section is for you to highlight the results of the exercise. Pertinent information here would include:**

For this data filtration process, our content analysis effort reports these key findings:

- **Style Guide: ethics of formatting and citing:**
  - APA is the primary choice for formatting and citing: 84% (25)
  - Unclear Style Guide: 10% (3)
  - MLA: 7% (2)
- **References (Bibliography, Works Cited, etc.):**
  - the most resources: 12 artifacts have 30 or more resources: 40%
  - 21-25 sources: 8 artifacts: 26%
  - 26-30 sources: 6 artifacts: 18%
  - the fewest resources: four artifacts have 15 or fewer: 13%
- **Primary research:** communications is an inter-disciplinary area of study, so our capstones use a mixed methods approach:
  - Methods: Qualitative: 100% (30) of artifacts use some form of qualitative research methods;
  - Methodology: 80% (24) of artifacts use some form of quantitative research methods;
  - Literature Reviews are an overwhelming choice for secondary research: 92% (27)
  - IRB: 62.5% of capstone projects are non-IRB (19); 37.5% receive IRB approval (11).
- **Methodology:** 100% of capstones focus on analyzing some form of professional communication (30)
  - the majority of artifacts analyze texts or documents: 45.3% (13)
  - Industry/Organizational Case Study analysis is 42% of capstones (12)
  - Usability A/B testing is 15% of capstones (4)
- **Concentrations:**
  - Strategic Communication capstones are the dominant choice: 73% (22)
  - Strategic and Technical: 13% (4)
  - Technical Communication: 10% (3)
  - Health, Health and Strategic, others, etc. 4%
- **Artifact length:**
  - 37 is the shortest; 94 is the longest; the mean is 65.5 pages
  - True average: 54 pages
- **Perception of Formatting and Citation Competencies:** this question was the only one where raters were asked to assess the competency of writers using the IDMU codes:
  - Mastery: 36% (11)
  - Developing: 50% (15)
  - Introductory: 10% (3)
  - Unsatisfactory: 3.3% (1)

## V. CLOSING THE LOOP

Based on your results, what changes/modifications are you planning in order to achieve the desired level of mastery in the assessed learning outcome? This section could also address more long-term planning that your department/program is considering and does not require that any changes need to be implemented in the next academic year itself.

### Closing the Loop (Graduate):

Our general research question (RQ), "what does research look like in MAPC?," offers an essential starting point for exploring how research factors in the capstone/culminating experience course.

The MAPC Steering Committee decided to divide the assessment of PLO #4 and capstones into three parts: (1) our initial inquiry assessed oral capstone presentations; (2) this year's inquiry focuses on the written capstones by using content analysis to take inventory of the research-related choices of 30 capstone projects from three different cohorts. For this exploratory purpose, our objective is to understand and describe the technical and ethical choices related to capstone research writing. This sample population provided some useful information re: specific kinds of patterns and themes related to the technical choices of our students.

Next year, we will begin designing a research inquiry that explores the plurality of written capstones by examining its arguments. Before we begin revising or modifying our curriculum, our next step is to conduct Pt. 3 to engage a more descriptive inquiry that measures student competencies related to "skilled and ethical research" as PLO#4 states. At this point, we have to determine when this inquiry will happen—either this spring or next fall—because reading capstones for its scholarly and argumentative content requires significant time and effort. Once we determine a clear timeline, we can begin to formulate our next steps to identify and discover specific programmatic issues and strengths to further explore program learning objectives, mission, and curricula in relation to our longer-term planning.

**2. What were the most important suggestions/feedback from the FDCD on your last assessment report (for academic year 2018-2019, submitted in October 2019)? How did you incorporate or address the suggestion(s) in this report?**

### Suggestions (Major/Graduate/Certificate):

Because our inquiry is ongoing, the FDCD recommends (from last year) we continue with our efforts to collect data and evidence. Any program changes await further analysis of this discovery, particularly in the next step where we decide on what qualitative and argumentative data to collect regarding our capstone analysis.

## ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

### MAPC Curriculum Map 2019

Master of Arts in Professional Communication started in Fall 2016. This revised curriculum map accounts for all courses that were approved and submitted since.

Key: (I) introductory graduate level, (D) developing competency, (M) and mastery (indicates higher levels of achievement from advanced students).

<b>Program Learning Outcomes</b>	1. Core	2. Communication	3. Professionalism	4. Research
<i>Required Courses (12 units)</i>				
*600 Foundations of Communication	IDM	I-D	I	I-D
*602 Ethics in Communication	I-D	I	I	I
*604 Research Methods	I-D	I-D	I-D	I-D
*608 Capstone Project (& Oral Presentation)	M	M	M	M
<i>Strategic Communication (12-units)</i>				
620 Strategic Communication+	I	I	I-D	I
622 Comm. Plan & Leadership+	D	D	D-M	D
624 Crisis Communication+	D-I	D-I	D-I	D-I
626 Communication and the Law+	D	D	D	D
628 Cross-Cultural Business Comm.+	D	D-I	D	D
629 Reputation Management+	I	I	I	I
<i>Technical Communication (12-units)</i>				
630 Tech Communication+	I	I	I	I
632 Digital Communication+	I-D	I-D	D	I-D
634 Usability Testing and UX Research+	D-M	D-M	D-M	D-M
636 Emergent Media and Technology+	I-D	D	D	D
638 Digital Storytelling+	I	I-D	I-D	I
<i>Health Communication (12-units)</i>				
640 Health Communication+	I	I	I	I
642 Risk Communication+	I-D	I-D	D	I-D
644 Media Advocacy+	I-D	I-D	D	I-D
Course Substitution+	I	I	I	I
<i>Electives (12-units)</i>				
692 Communication Consultancy	I	I-D	I-D	I-D
606 Seminar in Rhetoric	D	D	D	D
694 Internship	I-D	D	D	D
<i>Service (2-units)</i>				
680 Graduate Writing Instruction	I	I	I	I

- \*Indicates required program courses.
- +Indicates courses in concentration.

### Program Learning Outcomes\*

1. **Core Knowledge:** graduate students will define, identify, and apply the rhetorical conventions and strategies appropriate to communicating effectively and ethically to varied audiences;
2. **Scholarly Communication:** graduate students will write and edit a substantial amount of revised prose, meeting standards and applying conventions defined by the field of communication;
3. **Professionalism:** graduate students will produce written, oral and digital communication of high quality consistent with their professional concentration and focus;
4. **Research:** graduate students will conduct skilled and ethical research in the field of communication and contribute original knowledge in their chosen industry and profession.

---

### Notes:

- \*PLOs were vetted and approved by MAPC Steering Committee and were submitted to CAS on 3/31/17.
- Comments from M. Meritt via email (5/24/17): “Your PLOs are strong and articulated well. They are clear and concise, presenting measurable skills and knowledge.”
- **Key:** (I) introductory graduate level, (D) developing competency, (M) and mastery range indicates higher levels of achievement from advanced students. For example:
  - **Introductory** means student work sufficiently demonstrates an awareness of rhetorical conventions and/or strategies appropriate for the assigned task.
  - **Developing** means student work adequately defines, identifies, and/or applies rhetorical conventions and/or strategies appropriate for the assigned task.
  - **Mastery** means student work correctly and thoroughly defines, identifies, and/or applies rhetorical conventions and/or strategies appropriate for the assigned task.

# MAPC Annual Review 2020: Capstone Review, Pt. 2a f/ PLO#4

Preamble:

Thank you, again, for agreeing to help us conduct our annual MAPC review.

In our program, all students are required to present their capstones orally before turning in their written capstones as part of their degree requirement.

Last year, MAPC started a two-part, two-year review of capstones. In Pt. 1, the review committee examined 20 capstone oral presentations in relation to PLO #3 (Professional Presentation).

This year, Pt. 2a of our review focuses on this general inquiry: "what does research look like in MAPC?"—as this question relates to the written capstones and PLO #4.\* This review follows a data filtration or filtering process where the committee chooses a smaller focus rather than engage in a longer reading of capstones. After this filtration process has concluded, the committee will determine the extent to which other aspects of capstones will be assessed (in, perhaps, a 2b).

To conduct this year's review, the MAPC Steering Committee decided on a few research constraints due to our limited time frame: (1) because written capstone projects are more substantial and substantive than other kinds of graduate papers, the committee opted to survey key aspects of these papers rather than read and rate the artifacts using the IDMU competency codes; and (2) the committee limited the sample size to 20 artifacts.

To elaborate, MAPC has three concentrations that produce a plurality of capstones. This plurality means students utilize multiple research methods and methodologies, such as those that are steeped in humanities practices and those from the social sciences, to create their capstones. Because of these variances, our review will focus on taking inventory of student choices. Our filtration survey will record the different kinds choices, including research questions, thesis and hypothesis-based inquiries, quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods of data collection, and different analytical approaches to content and textual analysis. The filtration of data collection requires taking inventory of the shape and scope of the capstones, so understanding the ethics of technical choices (such as formatting and citation practices) and the components related to research methods and methodologies, are sensible objectives.

Once this process is completed, the Steering Committee will explore the option of assessing the capstones further by using the IDMU (introductory, developing, mastery and unsatisfactory) codes either in next year's annual review or in another context.

Sample size: for our study, the sample source is more important than the sample size, for the available capstone projects are submitted within a closed system of data collection related to

our capstone courses. For this reason, our choice of 20 capstones are considered non-probability samples that are purposive in nature.

---

\*PLO#4: "Research: graduate students will conduct skilled and ethical research in the field of communication and contribute original knowledge in their chosen industry and profession."

\* Required

## Section II: PC 608 Capstone/Culminating Experience

Though we often use "Capstone" as shorthand, PC 608 gives faculty and students the option of choosing between a research-related assignment and reflective work to complete the course. For our program, (a) capstones are research-oriented projects that focus on exploring, analyzing and often resolving work-related communication problems; usually, these research inquiries are often thesis-structured in design or are constrained by research questions; and (b) culminating experiences focus on student learning and reflection-oriented analysis that can often include portfolios of academic, personal and professional work. This reflection focuses on understanding and explaining graduate course work, internship and work experiences, and measures personal and professional growth in relation to the program's learning outcomes and their own personal and professional values.

Below is the full catalog description for PC 608:

---

### PC 608 - Capstone/Culminating

The capstone project/culminating experience is a required course for the Masters of Arts in Professional Communication (MAPC). Projects range from theoretical to practical in application. Course is three (3) units.

3.000 Credit hours

3.000 Lecture hours

Levels: Graduate

Schedule Types: Seminar

Professional Communication Department

Course Attributes:

Tuition (Liberal Arts)

## Section III: Pre-Survey Data

This section captures key technical data related to the capstones.

1. A. Number of File: coded file numbers are located in the individual folders (ex. Folder #1 has files 1.1, 1.2, etc. and so on). \*

---

2. B. Title of Capstone (copy and paste from each capstone artifact): \*

---

3. C. Page Length: from title page to the end of the final page (including reference pages and appendices), how many pages is this capstone? \*

---

Section II: Survey:  
Formatting and  
Dimension

This section captures some key aspects related to the ethics of research. Research format and attribution and citation practices are ethical concerns.

4. 1a. Formatting and Style Guide \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Capstone uses APA: running header has title, References page, etc.
- Capstone uses MLA: running header has last name and page number; uses Works Cited page, etc.
- Formatting and citations practices are unclear: maybe a mixture of APA, MLA, etc.
- Other: may include Chicago, Turabian, etc.

5. 1b. Formatting and Style Guide Perception: please rate each artifact based on your perception of the writer's use of chosen style guide. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- A. Mastery: writer thoroughly uses citation and formatting practices appropriate to audience to needs and expectations.
- B. Developing: writer adequately uses citation and formatting practices appropriate to audience to needs and expectations.
- C. Introductory: writer sufficiently uses citation and formatting practices appropriate to audience to needs and expectations.
- D. Unsatisfactory: writer minimally uses citation and formatting practices appropriate to audience to needs and expectations.

6. 2. In terms of References (APA) or Works Cited (MLA), this capstone has: \*

*Check all that apply.*

- 15 or fewer listed sources
- 16-20 listed sources
- 21-25 listed sources
- 26-30 listed sources
- 30 and above listed sources
- Unable to determine the number of sources (missing reference page, for example)

7. 3. This capstone went through the Internal Review Board (IRB) process. If so, the document should indicate this process (some times in the Methods section, or IRB materials may be located in the Appendices). \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes, paper indicates IRB approval.
- No, paper does not indicate IRB approval.

Original  
and  
Secondary

The implementation of primary data collection is evidence of original research. The methods of data collection vary between qualitative (QL) and quantitative (QN), so measuring the presence of these methods is important. But because literature

**Research**

reviews are a requirement for all capstone projects, understanding the extent to which this secondary research is present is worth cataloging as well.

**8. 3a. Research Methods, Part I: Qualitative methods, check all that apply. \***

*Check all that apply.*

a. Annotated Bibliography (AB): as secondary research, a list of sources with summary and analysis.

b. Literature Review (LR): as secondary research, the review of literature synthesizes existing data within the capstone's focus of inquiry.

c. Qualitative (QLH): human subjects as original or primary research: student conducts interviews, focus groups, surveys, card sorting, field observations, etc.

d. Qualitative (QLT) textual analysis as original or primary research: student collects existing oral and/or written documents, artifacts, texts, (primary, secondary) and analyzes these texts.

e. Other aspects of Qualitative Analysis (QA).

Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

**9. If you chose "Other" for 3a, feel free to explain your choice.**

\_\_\_\_\_

**10. 3b. All capstones are expected to have Literature Reviews (LR). However, capstones utilize LRs differently depending upon research goals. For this capstone, the LR has its own section, appearing under its own header.**

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## 11. 4. Research Methods, Part II: Quantitative Methods, check all that apply

*Check all that apply.*

- a. Quantitative (QNO): student captures original data from human respondents: using methods such as Likert Scale, time-test-completion data, preferential and/or satisfaction surveys, etc.
- b. Quantitative (QNE): student uses existing data sets for analysis rather than create original study, such as list of wages, graduation rates, television ratings, box office receipts, etc.
- c. Other aspects of Quantitative data collection.
- Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

## 12. If you chose "Other" for #4, feel free to explain your answer.

---

---

---

---

---

## 13. 5. Research Methodology: once data is captured, what kind of methodology does the capstone use to organize and analyze the data? Please check all that apply. \*

*Check all that apply.*

- a. Textual or Document Analysis: analyzes exclusively texts and textualities to understand discourse content and/ or rhetorical purposes: focuses exclusively on textual analysis (with no interviews of human respondents).
- b. Case Study Analysis: examines organizational and/or industry related acts of communication, such as an organization's messaging, social media posts, advertising, etc.
- c. Research Inquiry of Communicative Acts: analyzes visuals, designs, and texts; can have human respondents (interviews, focus groups, surveys, etc.).
- d. Usability Testing: A/B Testing: engages in product or procedural testing (software, hardware, etc.) with human respondents (interviews, focus groups, surveys, etc.) and triangulates data.
- e. Other

14. If you chose "Other" for #5, feel free to explain your answer.

---

---

---

---

---

15. 6. Concentration Area: written project best fits one of the areas below. Note: for example, if you detect the dominant focus is medical rhetoric or health-related communication, then choose (a). If you interpret the the paper treats technical communication equally as strategic, then choose (e) and so on. You get the idea.

\*

*Mark only one oval.*

- a. Health Communication
- b. Strategic Communication
- c. Technical Communication: includes digital design, UX/UI testing.
- d. Both Strategic and Health Communication
- e. Both Strategic and Technical Communication
- f. both Health and Technical Communication
- g. Equal parts Health, Strategic and Technical Communication
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

16. Feel free to explain your choice above.

---

17. 7. This artifact is: \*

*Check all that apply.*

- A. Capstone: a research-related capstone project.
- B. Culminating Experience: a reflective work of personal and professional growth.
- C. Both a research-related project and a reflective work of personal and professional growth.

Observations, Comments  
and Questions

Please include any additional comments, observation and questions for this capstone artifact.

18.

---

---

---

---

---

---

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms