ASSESSMENT REPORT REMOTE/DISTANCE LEARNING
ACADEMIC YEAR 2019 - 2020
REPORT DUE DATE: December 4, 2020

This is an alternative template.
Given the unusual circumstances of the 2019-2020 academic year, each program/department/major/minor/certificate has two options of assessment:
(a) Usual assessment report based on attached template OR
(b) Alternative assessment reflections on distance learning pivot based on this template
Every program/department/major/minor/certificate can choose ONE of the two report formats to submit

Please make sure to fill out Page 1 – Questions 1 and 2

https://myusf.usfca.edu/arts-sciences/faculty-resources/academic-effectiveness/assessment

Email to submit the report: assessment_cas@usfca.edu

Important: Please write the name of your program or department in the subject line.

For example: FineArts_Major

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).

Peter Lorentzen, Program Director
plorentzen@usfca.edu

Michael Jonas, Dept. Co-Chair
mrjonas@usfca.edu

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

Please also indicate which report format are you submitting –Standard Report or Reflections Document

Reflections Document for Graduate Program (MSAE).

3. Have there been any revisions to the Curricular Map in 2019-2020 academic year? If there has been a change, please submit the new/revised Curricular Map document.

There have been no revisions to the curricular map.

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 <u>an aggregate report, please provide the current mission statements of both the major and the minor program</u>

Mission Statement

"The Master of Science in Applied Economics at the University of San Francisco will train students to apply the theoretical insights and empirical techniques of modern economics to practical problems in the business, government, and non-profit sectors. Students will learn how to use the tools of economically informed data analysis to grapple with the implications of the new markets and new information sources created by advances in information technology."

3. 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 <u>an aggregate report, please provide the current PLOs for both the major and the minor programs.</u>

No changes since previous submission.

PLO-1: Economic Data Manipulation: Students will be able to effectively use modern programming languages to clean, organize, query, summarize, visualize, and model large volumes and varieties of data.

PLO-2: Economic Data Analytics: Students will possess a theoretical and applied understanding of the use of econometrics and statistics for descriptive and causal inference.

PLO-3: Applied Economic Theory: Students will be able to understand and apply economic theory to understand how businesses and other organizations interact with each other and with users/customers/clients and use this understanding to guide data analysis.

PLO-4: Economic Problem Solving: Students will be able to solve real-world data-driven business and policy problems working with economists, policy makers, data scientists and business practitioners.

PLO-5: Economic Communication: Students will be able to communicate their research approach and findings at an excellent level, both in writing and verbally.

III. REMOTE/DISTANCE LEARNING

Note: The responses below are based on faculty input delivered via email and in-person discussion. All numerical values are approximate.

Since all faculty within the department teach across our three programs (undergraduate, MSAE and MSIDEC), all responses below are department level, and apply to all programs equally.

1. **What elements of the program were adaptable to a remote/distance learning environment?**

All classroom-based activities were, to varying degrees, adaptable to remote/distance learning. We have no physical lab or multi-person performance component required within our discipline's typical pedagogy.

The four major elements of class-room discussion shared by all our courses and instructors are: Lecture, discussion, tutorial, and student presentations. It is possible to engage in all of these activities in a remote/distance environment.

2. **What elements of the program were not adaptable to a remote/distance learning environment?**

*The one element of our department's programs that was not easily adaptable to the remote/distance learning environment is the **summer field research component** of the MSIDEC program. Each summer, a cohort of students travel abroad under the supervision of an adviser to gather observational data and/or conduct randomized control experiments. Upon return, they begin analyzing this data as part of their Masters Thesis.*

With travel restrictions, this procedure was not possible for most students in Summer 2020. However, many students were able to conduct data gathering in their home countries or regions, upon return from the bay area after in-person classes were cancelled.

Combined with creative use of distance communication tools, each student was able to conduct quality data gathering for their research, but the experience was not typical for this cohort.

Otherwise, all course material is able to be delivered remotely, with adaptation.

3. What was the average proportion of synchronous versus asynchronous learning for your program or parts thereof? A rough estimate would suffice.

75% synchronous vs. 25% asynchronous across Spring and Fall.

Faculty incorporated more asynchronous material in Fall relative to Spring, on average.

4. For what aspects of learning is synchronous instruction effective and for which ones is asynchronous instruction more effective?

Delivering lecture material, especially prepared slides, can be done effectively as both synchronous class time, and pre-recorded lecture videos. The consensus is that short (approx. 30min or less) lecture videos are most appreciated by students. This gives them the flexibility to watch on their own time, pause, re-watch, etc. Combined with synchronous discussion/tutorial/examples based on the lecture video, this can be a very effective strategy.

The most often mentioned challenge in synchronous remote learning is fostering student engagement. Many faculty in economics used creative means and did see success in encouraging in-class inter-actions. These strategies included break-out rooms, in class polls, offering incentives such as extra credit or participation points.

Another common challenge is delivering exam material. This was left up to individual faculty decide how best to handle exams. Some used synchronous class time and full remote proctoring of students taking exams with the Respondus lock-down browser through Canvas. Approximately 60% of faculty reported using this method with success.
Four major concerns were brought forward with this method:
1. *Privacy – not all students are comfortable being on camera.*

2. *Technology - Impacts of disparities between students in terms of quality of internet access and camera.*

3. *Home life – not all students have a quiet place to sit for a long stretch of time to take an exam.*

4. *Time-zones – Our students are located all over the globe, and exams may be scheduled at very inconvenient local times.*

Partially in response to these concerns, approximately 40% of faculty report giving exams asynchronously as un-proctored "take-home" exams. This, of course, requires us to allow students to use whatever resources they may have access to in answering questions, and also requires faculty to communicate very clearly what is allowed and what is not. This method was found more suitable to exams that are "process-based" rather than "fact-based". For example, a broad question like "given the following regression model output, explain five things the researcher should consider" will not have a ready answer on Google.

__Student presentations__: 80% of faculty in the department who assign student presentations did so synchronously, typically with exceptions for students with extenuating circumstances (see issues with exams, above). Faculty report a desire to explore assigning pre-recorded video presentations, as well, as a way to take advantage of the technology.

5. **As remote/distance learning continues in the current environment, what changes has the program instituted based on experiences with remote instruction?**

   No official policy changes have been made, either by the department as a whole nor by individual programs within the department.

   Informally, we have sought to institute greater communication among faculty about "best practices" in online instruction, with a focus on sharing of information, technology recommendations, and early warnings about problems.

Beginning in Spring semester, we will create a new specific faculty role as "department online teaching technology officer". This person will act as the clearing house for faculty recommendations, complaints, or requests, and be the liaison between the department and ITS/ETS when needed.