ASSESSMENT REPORT REMOTE/DISTANCE LEARNING

Public Relations Minor – Alternate Report

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

- **Who should submit the report?** – All majors, minors (including interdisciplinary minors), graduate and non-degree granting certificate programs of the College of Arts and Sciences.
- Programs can combine assessment reports for a major and a minor program into one aggregate report as long as the mission statements, program learning outcome(s) evaluated, methodology applied to each, and the results are clearly delineated in separate sections. If you choose to submit a remote learning reflections document, it should also have separate segments for major and minor
- Undergraduate, Graduate and Certificate Programs must submit separate reports. An aggregate report is allowed only for major and minor of the same program
- It is recommended that assessment report not exceed 10 pages. Additional materials (optional) can be added as appendices
- Curriculum Map should be submitted along with Assessment Report

Some useful contacts:

1. Prof. Alexandra Amati, FDCD, Arts – adamati@usfca.edu
2. Prof. John Lendvay, FDCD, Sciences – lendvay@usfca.edu
3. Prof. Mark Meritt, FDCD, Humanities – meritt@usfca.edu
4. Prof. Michael Jonas, FDCD, Social Sciences – mrjonas@usfca.edu
5. Prof. Suparna Chakraborty, AD Academic Effectiveness – schakraborty2@usfca.edu

Academic Effectiveness Annual Assessment Resource Page:

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 (if you decide to submit a separate report for major and minor); FineArts_Aggregate (when submitting an aggregate report)

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).

Brandi Lawless, Chair, Communication Studies (bjlawless@usfca.edu) and

Zifei Fay Chen, Assistant Professor, Public Relations (zchen96@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

This report is submitted for the Minor in Public Relations. A separate report was submitted for the COMS major/minor.

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.

The most updated Curricular Map, as approved by the College Curriculum Committee in spring 2020, is provided below.

	PLO 1: Apply public relations and communication principles and theories to effectively analyze, critique, and evaluate public relations campaigns, programs, and communication strategies and tactics.	PLO 2: Demonstrate competency in the creation and implementation of public relations campaigns and programs	PLO 3: Evaluate the ethical implications of public relations, and engage in practices that are professional, socially responsible, and in the mutual interest of organizations and their publics
COMS 202 Rhetoric and the Public Sphere	N/A (for COMS major PLO)	N/A (for COMS major PLO)	N/A (for COMS major PLO)
COMS 203 Communication and Everyday Life	N/A (for COMS major PLO)	N/A (for COMS major PLO)	N/A (for COMS major PLO)
COMS 204 Communication and Culture	N/A (for COMS major PLO)	N/A (for COMS major PLO)	N/A (for COMS major PLO)

COMS 320: Public Relations Principles and Practices	I		I
COMS 322: PR Law & Ethics	I		D
COMS 323: Public Relations Writing		I	
COMS 324 Public Relations and Advertising Research		I	I
COMS 325: Social Media Strategies for Public Relations	D	D	
COMS 326: Public Relations Campaigns		M	D

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 (Major/Graduate/Certificate):

Mission Statement (Minor):

No, there have been no changes to the mission statement, as it was recently revised and we received excellent feedback on it.

The current mission statement:

The public relations minor aims to prepare students to become ethical and socially responsible public relations professionals. Our courses focus on developing students' skills in critical thinking, research and analytics, strategic planning, writing, and integrated communication. The program educates students on the importance and practices of cultivating mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and various publics, preparing them to become future strategic communication leaders.

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 an aggregate report, please provide the current PLOs for both the major and the minor programs.

Note: Major revisions in the program learning outcomes need to go through the College Curriculum Committee (contact: Professor Joshua Gamson, gamson@usfca.edu). Minor editorial changes are not required to go through the College Curriculum Committee.

PLOs (Major/Graduate/Certificate):

PLOs (Minor):

No changes have been made.

The PLOs for the PR minor as updated in the 2019-2020 academic year are:

PLO 1: Apply public relations and communication principles and theories to effectively analyze, critique, and evaluate public relations campaigns, programs, and communication strategies and tactics.

PLO 2: Demonstrate competency in the creation and implementation of public relations campaigns and programs.

PLO 3: Evaluate the ethical implications of public relations, and engage in practices that are professional, socially responsible, and in the mutual interest of organizations and their publics.

III. REMOTE/DISTANCE LEARNING

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

In spring 2020, the following classes were moved online since mid-March:

COMS 326 Public Relations Campaigns: Students continued their campaign projects with community partners (826 Valencia, Richmond Neighborhood Center, Livable City, Lava Mae[x]) online. Syllabus to include detailed materials on each class' agenda and plans to catch up for those who had to miss synchronous classes (esp. for international students who had to travel

suddenly) and workshops due to reasons out of their control. Additional communications were held with community partners and student teams, working on alternative plans for students to continue their campaign efforts and present their work virtually. Despite the challenges, the class ended on a high note: students walked away with a complete campaign book as planned, and community partners shared their gratitude for the works the students produced and the resilience they showed. Guest speakers were invited to join the class virtually. Speakers included Suzanne Block, Director and Head of West Coast Operations at Merritt Group, and Scott Wintner, Deputy Director, Marketing & Communications at Mineta San José International Airport.

COMS 490 (now COMS 324) Public Relations & Advertising Research: In response to the online transition during the pandemic, syllabus was revamped to include detailed instructions on readings before each class, specific agenda for each synchronous class, and what to do if a synchronous class is missed (esp. for international students). Guidelines and instructions were provided to move focus group, interview, and survey to online platforms. Despite the challenges, students achieved the intended learning outcomes and produced quality research reports for their portfolio. Guest speakers were invited to join the class virtually. Speakers included Emily Brandon, Managing Consultant at Ketchum Analytics, and Michael Lewis, Director of Customer Strategy & Insights and Marketing Strategy & Operations at Dropbox.

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

In general, the courses of the program adapted well to the remote/distance learning environment after making the conscious changes in syllabus structure, team-work dynamic (breakout rooms with shared Google doc and clear agenda), and guest speaker involvement. However, the adaptation was not without challenges. The biggest challenge was the ability for students to conduct field work and communicate with clients. For COMS 326 Public Relations Campaigns, the original plan was for students to have more community site visits, and to have community partners coming in for their midterm and final presentations. However, due to the changes and the impact from the pandemic, many community partners also experienced pivotal changes within their organizations. Despite their willingness to continue the partnership, it was difficult to keep our communication as timely as before, and for some teams, we were not able

to get direct feedback from community partners for the students' work products. We also had to adapt the campaign plans accordingly, as many were planning on implementing in-person events. Eventually, the students adjusted their plans accordingly, and delivered presentations online.

For COMS 490 Public Relations and Advertising Research, the most challenging part of the online environment was the data collection phase. Fortunately, we have already completed field observation before the pandemic. We experienced some challenges moving interviews and focus groups online, but were able to adapt the methods to online data collection.

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

Both classes in the spring 2020 semesters were taught synchronously since the transition. Asynchronous alternative was offered for international students who experienced internet connectivity issues or in a different time zone, along with individual Zoom check-in's.

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

Because both classes were hands-on, project based, rather than lecture focused, synchronous instruction was effective in providing short lectures, organizing group activities/project feedback session in breakout room, and interacting with guest speakers. It also allows students to stay in touch with one another on a regular basis.

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

The program has updated syllabus structures, course activities, and format of the exam to better suit the remote learning environment. For example, syllabus and topics will be organized in topical modules; course activities are accompanied with shared Google documents; exams are shifted to take-home format and projects; presentations are delivered virtually. We were able to

include a more expansive guest speaker list because geolocation is no longer a barrier for their visit.

OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

(Any relevant tables, charts and figures, if the program so chooses, could be included here)