

ASSESSMENT REPORT
Department of Rhetoric and Language
ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-21
November 1, 2021

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).

Curriculum & Assessment Committee Chair Jonathan Hunt
jhunt2@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

None of the above.

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 revisions.

II. MISSION STATEMENT & PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Were any changes made to the program mission statement since the last assessment cycle? Kindly state “Yes” or “No.”

No, it was last revised in 2017.

Mission Statement (~~Major/Graduate/Certificate~~):

The mission of the Rhetoric Program and the Department of Rhetoric and Language is to teach all University of San Francisco students to communicate effectively and ethically in academic, civic, and professional contexts. Through our classes, service, and co-curricular activities, we advance the Jesuit ideal of *eloquentia perfecta*—reason and eloquence in writing, speaking, and literacy—and guide our students as they learn to engage critically with the texts that influence their beliefs, values and actions.

2. Were any changes made to the program learning outcomes (PLOs) since the last assessment cycle? Kindly state “Yes” or “No.”

No, they were last revised in 2017.

PLOs (~~Major/Graduate/Certificate~~):

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the rhetoric program, students will be able to:

1. Explain and apply rhetorical concepts, theories, and principles in the process of analyzing various texts and rhetorical situations.
2. Produce research-driven written, oral, and digital communication that demonstrates awareness, knowledge, and application of rhetorical concepts.
3. Evaluate the ethics and effectiveness of their own and others’ communication in academic, civic, and professional situations.
4. Articulate and interpret their own rhetorical choices and composing processes.

PLO(s) being assessed (~~Major/Graduate/Certificate~~):

4. Articulate and interpret their own rhetorical choices and composing processes.

III. METHODOLOGY

To collect a representative sample of student work, we made a list of all courses offered in RHET this semester (93 courses) and used a randomize function to select 10 courses. We then generated random selections of 4 students from each of these 10 sections.

We asked instructors for 1 sample of student work from each of these students. We requested samples of assignments or activities where students are tasked with evaluating or reflecting on their work. Not all samples met this criterion, as some instructors assign reflective or self-assessment tasks only near the end of the semester.

Members of the Curriculum and Assessment Committee used a simple rubric to evaluate student learning regarding PLO 4 (above). The rubric is modeled on one suggested by CAS includes 4 categories:

- Student meets Learning Outcome
- Student meets most of Learning Outcome
- Student meets some of Learning Outcome
- Little or no evidence of meeting Learning Outcome

29 samples of student work were collected and anonymized (information identifying students, faculty, and courses was removed).. Each sample was read by 2 raters. In the event of non-contiguous ratings, a third rater was assigned.

Thanks to the faculty who devoted time and effort to rating student work:

Nicole Gonzales Howell

Cathy Gabor

Jonathan Hunt

Ted Matula

Michael Rozendal

IV. RESULTS & MAJOR FINDINGS

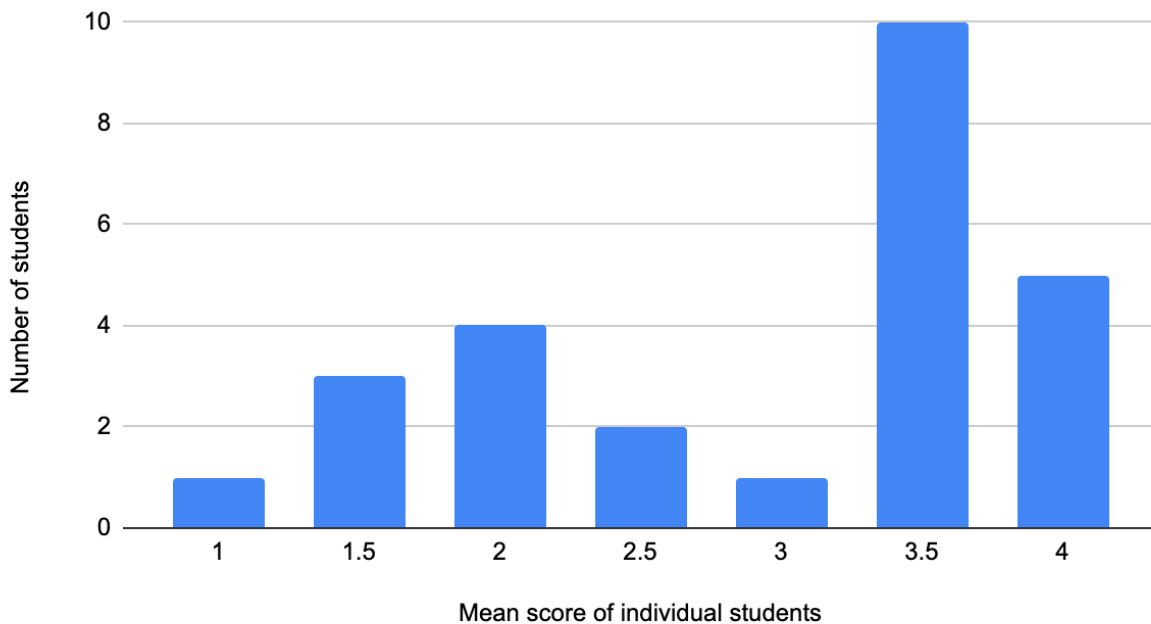
If we consider the rating rubric as a 4-point scale:

- 4 - Student meets Learning Outcome
- 3 - Student meets most of Learning Outcome
- 2 - Student meets some of Learning Outcome
- 1 - Little or no evidence of meeting Learning Outcome

The overall mean rating was 2.73, suggesting that most students in Rhetoric and Language courses are meeting most of PLO 4 in the course of their studies.

16 students, slightly more than half the sample, scored in the two highest categories (4 or 3), with the most common score being a 4 from one rater and a 3 from another, averaging to an individual score of 3.5, as illustrated below:

Student Performance PLO 4



Of the 29 samples received, 22 received a 4 (“student meets learning outcome”) or 3 (“student meets most of learning outcome”) from at least one rater, and 16 received a 4 or 3 from two raters.

As written, our Program Learning Outcomes state: “Upon successful completion of the rhetoric program, students will be able to...” Most USF students take two or three Rhetoric and Language courses in order to fulfill their Core A1 (Public Speaking) and A2 (Written Communication) requirements. A small number of students may take additional AEM or RHET courses. Because all our samples are from students currently enrolled in Rhetoric and Language courses, by definition these students have not yet successfully completed their studies in the Department. To correctly assess the PLO *as written*, we would need to collect samples from students subsequent to their completion of Rhetoric and Language coursework.

It seems obvious that any explicitly reflective assignment, even if it were the first assignment in a student’s college career, would be likely to show evidence of PLO 4. Similarly, it is unlikely that an assignment not explicitly calling for reflection or self-assessment would show evidence of PLO 4, because explicit discussions of authorial rhetorical choices and composing practices is not generally sanctioned in academic work. Thus our data reveal more about what kind of assignment students were given than about student mastery *per se* of PLO 4.

We know that not every student product will demonstrate all Course Learning Outcomes or all four Program Learning Outcomes; likewise, not every course offered will contribute to all four Program Learning Outcomes.

Of the 10 faculty selected randomly for participation, 9 are adjunct faculty members and one is a term faculty member. Eight of the participants were able to provide student samples by the deadline.

Inter-rater reliability seemed very low. In 12 of the 29 samples, the two initial raters disagreed by more than 1 point (awarding, for example, a 4 and 2 or a 3 and 1), requiring a third rater. Better planning and time management might have allowed us to do more effective norming.

V. CLOSING THE LOOP

1. 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 (~~Major/Graduate/Certificate~~):

We have low confidence in the value of this data, given low reliability of ratings and poor design of data collection (entirely the responsibility of the Curriculum and Assessment Committee Chair). Therefore, we would not use this as a basis for any discussion of programmatic or curricular changes.

We do see an opportunity to have a discussion as a Department about PLO 4. Questions that the Department might consider include:

1. Do we expect PLO 4 to be addressed at a particular point in a student's career (or in a specific course), or is it intended to be embedded throughout the Rhetoric and Language curriculum?
2. To what extent should we specify what constitutes "articulating rhetorical choices"? For example, if a student writes in a planning document, "I'm starting this speech with an anecdote," is that articulating a rhetorical choice? Or would there need to be evidence that this choice was weighing that against different options?

2. What were the most important suggestions/feedback from the FDCD on your last assessment report? How did you incorporate or address the suggestion(s) in this report?

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

Not applicable.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

None provided.