COMMUNICATION STUDIES MAJOR/MINOR

ASSESSMENT REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR 2017 – 2018
REPORT DUE DATE: 10/26/2018

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.

Note: Dear Colleagues: In an effort to produce a more streamlined and less repetitive assessment report format, we are piloting this modified template for the present annual assessment cycle. We are requesting an assessment report that would not exceed eight pages of text. Supporting materials may be appended. We will be soliciting your feedback on the report as we attempt to make it more user-friendly.

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
6. Ms. Corie Schwabenland, Academic Data & Assessment Specialist- ceschwabenland@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 & PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

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).**

Eve-Anne Doohan, Chair, Communication Studies Department, edoohan@usfca.edu

2. **Were any changes made to the program mission statement since the last assessment cycle in October 2017? 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.**

No.

COMS Major and Minor Mission Statement:

The Department of Communication Studies is a community of scholars whose mission is to empower students to achieve their personal and professional goals through becoming clear, effective, and ethical communicators. Communication Studies graduates will be educated in understanding, critiquing, and producing arguments and texts with the goal of fostering a sense of civic responsibility and a shared commitment to social justice.

3. **Were any changes made to the program learning outcomes (PLOs) since the last assessment cycle in October 2017? 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.

No.

COMS Major Program Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will articulate and define major theories and concepts used in the study of communication.

2. Students will design a research project that engages scholarly literature to address significant and appropriate questions/issues.

3. Students will demonstrate the ability to select and analyze text(s), collect and analyze data, and answer research questions and test hypotheses.

4. Students will identify and assess the social context for their messages and craft effective messages for specific audiences.

5. Students will be able to identify how communication produces, reinforces, and critiques social inequalities and power relations.

The Communication Studies Minor includes PLOs 1 and PLO 3. Because there are only 8 declared COMS minors, our understanding is that we do not need to submit a full assessment report.

4. **Which particular Program Learning Outcome(s) did you assess for the academic year 2017-2018?**

For the COMS major, we finished the assessment of PLO 5 during the 2017-2018 academic year, and began working on assessing PLO 2.

Because the COMS minor only includes PLO 1 and PLO 3, our plan is to assess the COMS minor students when we assess those PLOs for the COMS major (but we will do separate analyses for the COMS minors). Because we have such few COMS minors, however, we are already beginning to collect work products from the COMS minors that we have in class.

II.   METHODOLOGY

5. **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."

> **Important Note** – WSCUC advises us to use "direct methods" which relate to a <u>direct evaluation of a student work product</u>. "Indirect methods" like exit interviews or student surveys can be used only as additional l complements to a direct method.
>
> <u>For any program with fewer than 10 students</u>: If you currently have fewer than 10 students in your program (rendering your statistical analysis biased due to too few data points), it is fine to describe a multi-year data collection strategy here. It would be important to remember that <u>every 3 years</u>, we would expect you to have enough data to conduct a meaningful analysis.
>
> <u>Important</u>: *Please attach, at the end of this report, a copy of the rubric used for assessment.*

We have a two-part process for assessment. The first involves work products identified by students that we use to develop and test our rubric. As part of our COMS 496: Communication Studies Internship course, students complete a "Learning Assessment and Skills Translation" assignment where they explain what each of our PLOs mean to them and upload a work product from a class that they think demonstrates how they meet each PLO. We find this is a great way to get students aware of the learning outcomes for our major and have them reflect on the coursework they have completed. They also then work on translating the material into skills they could talk about on a resume or in a job interview. For the first part of the assessment of each PLO, we use the materials that students have uploaded. These are used to help us practice with the rubric we have developed and do an initial test of our interrater reliability. For the second part of the assessment of each PLO, we randomly select 10% of students in each class that professors have identified as meeting a specific PLO (via our curriculum map). Professors then pull the work products of the randomly selected students that they think are the best ways to assess the PLO for that particular class. Our PA then redacts any identifying information. The COMS Assessment Committee then trains all of the other faculty on the use of the rubric.

For this past year (PLO 5), the rubric was developed and practice rating occurred in the spring of the previous year. Then training of all faculty and rating occurred in January. This year, and moving forward, we are going to develop the rubric in the fall and train and rate in the spring. This will allow us to focus solely on one PLO each year, and have less time in between the initial development and the training of all the other faculty.

We had 196 students enrolled in the Spring of 2018 in courses that met PLO 5 (including COMS 202, 204, 314, 337, 375, and 490). We rated work products from 20 randomly selected students. Each work product was rated three times (by three different faculty members). Cronbach's alpha was .708, which indicates that an acceptable level of reliability was reached.

We would like to point out a few things about our assessment plan. All COMS faculty rotate on to the COMS Assessment Committee and serve for two years (with the Department Chair serving as Chair of the COMS Assessment Committee and serving for the duration of their three-year term as Chair). This past year (2017-2018), the COMS Assessment Committee was made up of Evelyn Ho, Brandi Lawless, and Marco Jacquemet, with Eve-Anne Doohan chairing the committee. For this coming year (2018-2019), the COMS Assessment Committee is made up of Marilyn DeLaure, Allison Thorson, and Bryan Whaley, with Eve-Anne Doohan chairing the committee. Also, all of the faculty serve as faculty raters. We had 100% faculty involvement this past year, which we think is impressive.

III.   RESULTS & MAJOR FINDINGS

6. **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:
    a. **how well students mastered the outcome at the level they were intended to,**
    b. **any trends noticed over the past few assessment cycles, and**
    c. **the levels at which students mastered the outcome based on the rubric used.**

The rubric we developed allows us to indicate what level of achievement was met and to map whether this is the appropriate level of achievement for that particular course (e.g., our foundation course, COMS 202 is supposed to meet PLO 5 at the Introductory level, while another foundational course, COMS 204 is supposed to meet PLO 5 at the Developing level). The results for PLO 5 are below:

Introductory Level (COMS 202):

1 student = 0
1 student = 3
2 students = 4
1 student = 5

These results indicate that the majority of students in COMS 202 are meeting the learning outcome at a higher level of achievement than they need (developing or mastery).

Developing Level (COMS 204 and COMS 490):

4 students = 3
2 students = 4
1 student = 5

These results indicate that all of the students in COMS 204 and 490 are meeting the learning outcome, with almost half of the students achieving at a higher level than they need.

Mastery Level (COMS 314, 337, and 375):

1 student = 3
5 students = 4
3 students = 5

According to our current rubric, mastery is achieved by earning a rating of 5. Three of the students whose work products were rated from classes designed to reach PLO 5 at the mastery level achieved this goal. The majority of the students were rated as a 4 (in between developing and mastery).

We learned several things by using this rubric and interpreting the results. First, it is fairly easy to score a 1 on the rubric, and it is very difficult to score a 5. While the rubric indicates that a 5 is mastery, it perhaps is more indicative of near perfection. This perhaps then falsely indicates that our foundational courses are too difficult and also falsely indicates that our upper-division students are not achieving the mastery level as frequently as they should.

IV.   CLOSING THE LOOP

7. **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.

One possible solution to the observation that it is perhaps too easy to score at the introductory level and too difficult to score at the mastery level is to revise our rubrics. One possible revision is to have a score of 4 or 5 indicate mastery. Another possible revision is that perhaps our scoring of 1 needs to be more difficult. We are going to continue to have discussions about this as we practice with PLO 2. We would also appreciate any feedback that you might have for us about our rubric. The clear benefit of our rubric is that the level of achievement is built-in, with different components being indicative of introductory, developing, and mastery levels.

8. **What were the most important suggestions/feedback from the FDCD on your last assessment report (for academic year 2016-2017, submitted in October 2017)? How did you incorporate or address the suggestion(s) in this report?**

Our report last year indicated that we are doing a good job with assessment in our department. We were complimented on the rigor of our reliability checks and on the inclusion of both direct and indirect methods of assessment. It was also noted that our mission statement is "easily one of the best CAS mission statements." We received a recognition from Dean Camperi that COMS was a finalist for the assessment award. So we did not have any suggestions of things that should be changed or that we needed to implement.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

(Any rubrics used for assessment, relevant tables, charts and figures should be included here)

PLO 5: Students will be able to identify how communication produces, reinforces, and critiques social inequalities and power relations.

Blank - N/A	1 Introductory	2	3 Developing	4	5 Mastery
None or unclear	Does 1 out of 3: **Identifies** a specific social inequality or power relation(s). (**What?**) OR **Explain the context** of how these social inequalities or power relations manifest. (**How & Why?**) OR **Offers solutions/ alternatives or critiques** of social inequalities and power relations. (**What now?**)	Does 1 out of the 3 well and attempts to do 2 of the 3 but doesn't quite succeed. OR Attempts all 3 but done poorly.	Does 2 out of 3: **Identifies** a specific social inequality or power relation(s). (**What?**) AND / OR **Explain the context** of how these social inequalities or power relations manifest. (**How & Why?**) AND / OR **Offers solutions/ alternatives or critiques** of social inequalities and power relations. (**What now?**)	Does 2 out of the 3 well and the 3ʳᵈ is attempted but doesn't quite succeed.	Does all 3: **Identifies** a specific social inequality or power relation(s). (**What?**) AND **Explain the context** of how these social inequalities or power relations manifest. (**How & Why?**) AND **Offers solutions/ alternatives or critiques** of social inequalities and power relations. (**What now?**)

PLO 2: Students will design a research project that engages scholarly literature to address significant and appropriate questions/issues.

Blank - N/A	1 Introductory	2	3 Developing	4	5 Mastery
None or un-clear	summarizes literature and does not offer a significant/ appropriate question/ hypothesis about comm-unication	summarizes literature but does offer a significant/ appropriate question/ hypothesis about comm-unication**.**	synthesizes literature but does not offer a significant /appropriate question/ hypothesis about comm-unication OR summarizes and identifies gaps/makes critiques AND offers significant/ appropriate question/ hypothesis	Synthesizes literature and either identifies gaps/makes critiques, or offers significant/ appropriate question/ hypothesis OR Inconsistent or not fully synthesized, identifies gaps/makes critiques and offers significant/ appropriate question/ hypothesis	Does all 3: synthesizes literature, identifies existing gaps/makes critiques, which leads to a significant /appropriate question/ hypothesis about comm-unication