



The University Assessment Council

Minutes

February 27, 2024

Attendees: Ginger Bishop, Joy Burnham, Chris Coleman, Andre Denham, Sebrena Jackson, Grace Lee, Wilson Lowrey, Joyce Meyer, Michele Montgomery, Albert Pionke, Shae Robinson, Jennifer Roth-Burnette, Tim Salazar, Lance Simpson, Rachel Thompson, Valerie Tisdale, Derek Williamson, Akeisha Young

Zoom: <https://ua-edu.zoom.us/j/89026549480?pwd=V0tuOU0yNzI2dXVvSFE2c2lEUHVtQT09>

- Continuous Improvement Policy (Chris)
 - The updated version is available here: <https://ua-public.policystat.com/>
 - A PDF copy is in the UAC Box folder (2024.02.27)

- Joint programs and assessment (Chris, Ginger)
 - UA has several programs that are “joint” with UAB and/or UAH. Section 506 of the [Board Manual](#) defines a joint program as “...one that is mutually sponsored by two or more campuses, leading to a single degree that is conferred by all participating institutions” and delineates guidelines for the development and operation of joint programs (including collaboration among the partners and periodic review of the program).
 - A related SACSCOC standard (10.9: Cooperative Academic Arrangements) obligates institutions to ensure integrity/quality of work and regularly evaluate joint (and other) agreements.
 - Considerations for assessment:
 - We know that (non-joint) programs offered in multiple modalities are expected to disaggregate SLO data to ensure equity of learning across modalities (CI policy). A similar approach would seem to be good practice among joint programs, since all students receive the same degree regardless of their primary campus.
 - Should joint programs have shared/parallel SLOs and assessment methods? Again, it would seem to be good practice—along with collaborative review, discussion, and use of data.
 - Shared assessment reporting might be tricky if the participating institutions have different reporting platforms and expectations.

- Program-level assessment and grading (bullet points from group discussion)
 - The Box folder for the 2024.02.27 meeting includes a couple of resources related to assessment/grading distinctions. The group pointed out many of the considerations covered in those documents, plus others:
 - Desirable qualities in direct, program-level assessment measures include:
 - Aligned with the particular SLO;
 - Objective (e.g., based on common evaluation criteria/tools);
 - Likely to yield trustworthy, SLO-specific data (diagnostic) that could reveal avenues for improvement of learning (actionable).
 - The purpose of grading is to give individual feedback to students; the purpose of program-level assessment is to evaluate the extent to which cohorts of students have mastered particular aspects of learning (SLOs). Both are important.
 - In some circumstances, grades can be useful assessment measures (see “Desirable qualities” above). However, grades based on multiple ingredients may not yield fine-grained, actionable insights about what students have and haven’t learned.
 - Course grades (and binary measures such as pass/fail rates) are especially likely to be “blunt instruments” in terms of SLO assessment.
 - By their nature, curved grades aren’t likely to be useful assessment measures (forced distribution).
 - Assignment grades have more potential as assessment measures, if they’re aligned with a particular SLO (Engineering example) and evaluated consistently across instructors/sections.
 - Same with exams, though the trick there may be to drill down and harvest data based on questions/items that align with particular program SLOs.
 - Side note: This kind of harvesting can potentially be automated using Blackboard (Rachel described an imminent pilot project in an HES course). UA’s College of Education uses another platform (Student Learning & Licensure) to harvest course-embedded data (KPIs) aligned with 150+ standards/SLOs. They are able to run aggregated reports (no identifying info) to look at trends and identify relative strengths and weaknesses.
 - SACSCOC is not prescriptive about assessment measures/methods beyond the expectation that there be at least one **direct** measure per SLO. If you hear someone say something like, “SACS wants us to use a rubric,” that’s probably that person’s way of encouraging use of assessment tools that yield SLO-specific, diagnostic data that can reveal improvement avenues.

- OIT Authentication Changes (Chris, Rachel)
 - Per this recent [announcement](#), OIT is phasing out the use of LDAP for authentication purposes in 2024. SSO applications will need to migrate to a Microsoft solution. If you have questions related to platforms you manage, Rachel kindly offered to assist. OIE will be managing any required changes for Taskstream and Planning & Self Study, hopefully over the summer since that's the lowest usage time.

- Viability/vitality of degree programs (Ginger)
 - Both ACHE and the Board/UAS are planning in-depth reviews of degree program viability/vitality (usually tracked as the average number of graduating students over a 5-year window). For [ACHE](#), this will be a 3-year, statewide project that will result in some programs being asked to close. ACHE's current program viability targets (posted at the bottom of [this page](#)) are as follows:
 - Baccalaureate: 7.5 graduates per year
 - Master's: 3.75 graduates per year
 - EdS: 3.0 graduates per year
 - Doctorate: 2.25 graduates per year
 - Ginger noted that MFA programs will reportedly be treated as terminal degrees, which means their target may be lower than 3.75.

- Consistency in program representation (Albert, Ginger)
 - As an institution, we need to be consistent in representing what academic programs we offer (their names, designations). If you're looking at program listings on, say, college or departmental websites, make sure they're consistent with what's published in the current [UA catalogs](#) (undergraduate, graduate, Law).

Upcoming Meetings

March 26, 2024