

Accreditation And Assessment: A Provocative Approach

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INTRODUCTION

A persistent problem for colleges and universities seeking accreditation or re-accreditation is the successful implementation of an assessment program, which is designed to be an accurate measure of learning outcomes. Often, academics are concerned with the process of what is taught in class material, and not on what the desired outcome would be. This paper examines the assessment program of a latter-stage AACSB candidate school and how they implemented their assessment programs.

Recently, the AACSB had raised their expectation of learning outcomes for business courses (Doyle and Wood 2005). Although teachers typically use grades to assess the outcome of their learning expectations, accrediting bodies typically require a more in dept analysis of learning outcomes. Specifically, colleges and universities must ask themselves how a particular course of major prepares a student for a career in industry. However, before students are taking major courses, they are required to pass the general education and business core courses. Quite simply, these courses are designed to prepare students for upper level work (Carlson, Conn, and Ramsey 2002). If the desired outcome of the prerequisite and core business courses is achieved, then upper-level instructors can safely assume that students have a core competency of the basic business subjects and writing, meaning that they don't need to waste time re-teaching this material.

PROBLEMS ADDRESSED BY ASSESSMENT

The inherent problem in academia is a disconnect between instructors, causing problems in the level of student preparation for upper level business courses. According to data gathered by Doyle and Wood (2005), this disconnect causes the following problems:

- There may be imperfect enforcement of prerequisites
- Prerequisite classes may have poorly defined objectives
- Even with well-defined objectives, instructors of prerequisites may not have taught them well and students may not have learned them well.
- Students may have incentives to understate their level of retention of prerequisite material, which would necessitate its review.
- Students may learn material for the final exam of a prerequisite class but then forget it as knowledge depreciates over time (Kipps & Kohen, 1984).

Assessment seeks to remedy these problems by bringing both administration and faculty together to define the following:

- A strict enforcement policy regarding prerequisites
- All classes have clearly defined objectives. Prerequisite classes have the objective of adequately preparing students for upper level classes while upper level classes prepare students for careers in industry or graduate study.
- A pre-business major is established. No student who doesn't meet GPA requirements will be allowed to become a business major.

- All graduating seniors will be required to take the MFAT (Major Field Achievement Test). This will assess the student's knowledge in each individual area of business
- The faculty collaborates and puts in writing the desired outcomes for each major an the business school as a whole

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Student Learning Outcomes

The Undergraduate Program Assurance of Learning Goals:

BBA and BAS Degree Programs

Undergraduate business students are expected to accomplish the following learning outcomes by understanding the current issues and challenges with the intention of anticipating and understanding emerging future business challenges.

- **Business knowledge** – Students will be able to describe the basic functions of business - accounting, marketing, management, finance, international business, and quantitative analysis
- **Critical Thinking** - Students are able to identify business problems, research and analyze those problems and make sound business decisions
- **Communication** – Students are able to demonstrate leadership and communication skills (oral and written) and exhibit professional behavior
- **Ethics** - Students will be able to recognize, analyze and choose resolution to ethical problems explicit or implicit in decision making
- **Leadership** – Students will demonstrate business leadership and decision-making skills necessary to be effective managers
- **Technology** – To identify and use the most appropriate technology in decision-making and improving personal productivity

LEARNING OUTCOMES BY MAJOR

BBA In Accounting Learning Objectives

In addition to the above learning outcomes for undergraduate business students, undergraduate Accounting majors are expected to:

- Demonstrate understanding of the accounting principles
- Identify and analyze the contemporary issues and practices in the accounting profession.

BBA In Human Resource Management Expected Learning Outcomes

In addition to the above learning outcomes for undergraduate business students, undergraduate Human Resource Management majors are expected to:

- Describe and explain the functional areas of HR management
- Use and integrate the concepts of human resources management and core business knowledge to solve human resources problems and issues

BBA In Management Learning Outcomes

In addition to the above learning outcomes for undergraduate business students, undergraduate Management majors are expected to:

- Explain and describe the four functions of management
- Use and integrate the concepts of management and core business knowledge to solve business problems and issues

BBA In Marketing Learning Objectives

In addition to the above learning outcomes for undergraduate business students, undergraduate Management majors are expected to:

- Explain and describe the functional areas of marketing
- Use and integrate the concepts of marketing and core business knowledge to solve marketing problems and issues

BAS Degree In Technology Management Learning Objectives

In addition to the above learning outcomes for undergraduate business students, the BAS in Technology Management majors are expected to:

- Explain and describe the functional areas of technology management.
- To develop the abilities to use and integrate the concepts of business core in technology management.

MBA Degree Program Learning Goals

The graduates of the MBA degree are expected to have the following learning outcomes:

- To demonstrate strategic level knowledge of business methods, including accounting, management, marketing, and finance
- To apply managerial tools to develop and carry out business strategies in an imaginative, problem solving capacity
- To be able to use oral and written communication to express and opinions and ideas to others
- To analyze the role of ethics and social environment on managerial decisions
- To explain the effective integration of technology in strategic decision making

Identification of Changes and Improvements

When the assessment activities of programs and learning outcomes are completed evidence will be provided for changes and improvements that are needed.

Action Plans

After the changes and improvements that are needed have been agreed upon, action plans will be prepared. The action plans will be linked to the institution's planning and budgeting processes.

Periodic Reviews

Periodically, a review will be made of the programs in executing the action plans. When the action plans are successfully executed, they will result in realized Outcomes.

Annual Reports

Each year an annual summary will be prepared:

- To provide a summary of the findings of the assessment process,
- to identify the changes and improvements that are needed as a result of the assessments, and
- to show the realized outcomes as a result of making the changes and improvements.

TECHNIQUES USED IN ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Undergraduate Programs

A. *Direct Measures*

- **Strategic Management Course (direct measure of student learning)**
In the Strategic Management course, the common professional body of knowledge is integrated into actual business situations. Also, students are required to demonstrate their understanding and knowledge of the common professional body of knowledge by making operating business decisions.
- **ETS Major Field Achievement Test (MFST) (direct measure of student learning)**
Students' performance on the Educational Testing Service (ETS) Business Major Field Achievement Test (MFAT), which is taken as part of the Strategic Management course.
- **Course Embedded – Measuring Oral and Written Communication Skills (Direct Measure)**
Effective fall semester, 2006, the School of Business Administration will use a course embedded outcome assessment to measure student oral and written communication skills. The course embedded measurement will be implemented in BUSA 2105 – Communicating in the business Environment, and MGNT 4190 – Strategic Management (a capstone course).

B. *Indirect Measures*

- **EBI Survey – This measurement will provide comparative data for peer schools**
- **Student Survey (Indirect measure of student learning and satisfaction)**
A student survey is conducted every spring semester for both graduate and undergraduate programs to assess wide range of objectives from advisement to student learning in specific areas. The results are used to identify where changes and improvements are needed.
- **Alumni Survey**
This questionnaire has been completely redesigned to assess curriculum content in the undergraduate program. The sample consists of all undergraduate alumni who graduated one year and five years earlier. Please see Appendix C for summary of survey.
- **Survey of Employers**
This survey reviews a variety of management skills and competencies graduate demonstrate on the job. The survey is conducted every three years. This questionnaire gathers information about the employers' assessment of graduates' academic preparation and on-the-job-performance. Also it solicits employer suggestions for improving the academic preparation and skills of business graduates. A questionnaire is sent every three years to employers of School of Business graduates and the School of Business Advisory Council. This questionnaire gathers information about the employers' assessment of graduates' academic preparation and on-the-job-performance. Also it solicits employer suggestions for improving the academic preparation and skills of business graduates.
- **School of Business Advisory Board (Indirect measure)**
The School of Business Advisory Board meets twice a year to review mission, objectives, outcome assessment and make recommendations to the Dean and faculty of the School of Business

Administration. The School of Business Advisory Board has met twice this academic year, once in October and the second time on March 31, 2006.

MBA Programs

A. *Direct Measures*

- **MBA Strategic Management Course (direct measure of student learning)**
In the Strategic Management course, the common professional body of knowledge is integrated into actual business situations. Also, students are required to demonstrate their understanding and knowledge of the common professional body of knowledge by making operating business decisions.
- **MBA-MFAT – A Major Field Achievement Test (MFAT) (direct measure of student learning)**
Students' performance on the Educational Testing Service (ETS) MBA Major Field Achievement Test (MFAT) will be conducted effective 2006-07 academic year.

B. *Indirect Measures*

- **EBI Survey of MBA students – Indirect Measure of MBA learning goals**
- **MBA Student Satisfaction Survey – Indirect Measure of MBA learning goals**
- **Graduating Students Exit Exam – Indirect Measure of MBA learning goals**

CONCLUSION

Gaining and maintaining accreditation is of great importance to colleges and schools (Yunker 2000). In this process, assessment is used to gauge the goals and objectives of the college and school. At no expense, we show that 5 items that remedy the problems associated with assessment. In addition, we give the questions asked during a learning outcomes discussion. Any Dean or administrator who facilitates an active dialogue with faculty increases their chances for a successful accreditation process.

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NOTES