

Academic Program Assessment Report Academic Year 2020-2021

Executive Summary

Academic year 2020-2021 marks the midpoint of Kutztown University's three-year assessment cycle and the first full academic year of the Coronavirus pandemic. Given the serious nature of the health concerns, many courses that had previously been offered only face-to-face, were taught in a hybrid fashion or 100% online. Unlike many universities and businesses, however, in July 2020 Kutztown reopened, offering its students a residential experience, albeit in a slightly altered form.

Several programs completed minimal or no assessment work in AY 20-21 citing the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic as the reason. While the nature of instructional experiences certainly changed during that time (and continues to do so), some of these programs could have considered alternative means/uses for assessment that may assist in understanding how a program may shift and adapt instruction during crisis semesters. Efforts to support this mindset shift are highlighted in the professional development section. With our institutional mission foremost in our minds, we remain committed to ensuring an equitable educational environment that fosters deep learning for all our students, course modality notwithstanding. The Office of Assessment and the Deans' Offices provide extensive feedback to programs to foster sustainability of the assessment process.

In this report, we continue with a feature begun last year: spotlighting a program that has a history of conducting excellent assessment work. Additionally, more programs are beginning to implement small changes that impact student learning, and we highlight several from each college in our "closing-the-loop" section. Inasmuch as continuous improvement is the constant, we conclude with specific recommendations for some programs that appear to be stalled in their progress, as well as an action plan for the Office of Assessment and the Academic Assessment Council.

Professional Development

Professional development programs are an important part of building a culture of improvement at Kutztown University. To that end, a series of events was organized during the 2020-2021 academic year. The annual Kutztown University Autumn Assessment Day was held virtually on September 18, 2020. Bailey Watson demonstrated the University's assessment software, Nuventive/Improve, followed by a faculty panel on academic program assessment. Faculty presenters were Nicole McClure – English BA program; Amber Pabon – BSED Secondary Education program; and Amy Pfeiler-Wunder and Julia Hovanec – MEd Art Education and MA Arts Administration programs. The day ended with a discussion titled, "Reorienting Assessment in the time of COVID-19. "

The January 2021 Assessment Day centered on current areas of focus for Kutztown University. Dr. Tami Eggleston presented "First Steps to Addressing Equity in Assessment," and discussed ways in which Kutztown University faculty can begin to address equity in assessment instruments and in the analysis of assessment results. Emily Cripe and Kristina Fennelly then presented their assessment work, partly funded through assessment grants, assessing learning outcomes in the Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program. The General Education Assessment Committee briefly presented the committee's work and recent assessment results.

Assessment Grants

Each year since 2008, the Division of Academic Affairs has offered assessment grants. The awards are competitive and each year several grants are awarded, up to \$5000 each. In 2020, two grants were awarded, covering these areas of assessment:

- Assessment of a New Mentoring Program for Mathematics Students
- Ongoing Assessment of Student Outcomes in Computer Science and Information Technology

Exemplary Assessment Work

- ◆ The Office of Assessment recognizes the MA in Arts Administration program for its sustained assessment work. For example, SLO 2 Financial Management, "Analyze financial management and effective fundraising practices of arts organizations" was evaluated using a signature assignment. Most students (86%) achieved this criterion, and yet a modification to the assignment instructions was noted to ensure that students understand the expectations of the final paper.
- ◆ The program also evaluated SLO 3, "Assess the civic engagement and impact of arts organizations on communities." Upon finding that 50% of students achieved a level 4, the example arts programs were changed to be more reflective of a variety of diverse communities. In addition, a

second action was proposed and completed in response to this SLO. This included increased attention to students' research skills by increasing the final grade impact of a bibliography assignment. Finally, it must be noted that a new assignment was introduced: requiring students to find an academic journal article to support their class discussion contributions. Data collection on both these changes occurred in the 21-22 academic year and will be reported in the next report allowing evaluation of the impact of these changes.

Closing the Loop

College of Business

- ◆ When faculty in the Finance program assessed SLO 3, "Assess the inputs needed and justify the decision-making methodologies used to determine if resources should be allocated to an investment opportunity," an item analysis of scores revealed that students struggled with two aspects in particular: application of Excel functions and risk analysis. To improve learning in these areas, in-class instruction will be supplemented by short videos available on-demand.
- ◆ The Sport Management program continues to seek improvement of student learning. With respect to SLO 6, "demonstrate the ability to articulate the global scope of sport," for instance, students met expectations, although an item analysis showed areas in which the students could benefit from more learning opportunities. Thus, the program faculty planned to include a study abroad program in their rotation (Action Plan from 19-20 report). In the 20-21 academic year, results again indicated that improvement was necessary. The faculty created a new course, "Introduction to International Sport," which was approved by the department to be taught as part of the study-away curriculum. The course was approved by the UCC in November 2021 for an initial offering in summer 2022.
- ◆ A fairly new track in the Business Administration major, Supply Chain Management, is still establishing baseline assessments. In 20-21, the faculty assessed SLO 3, "Appraise how the external forces affect the performance of a supply chain." In their analysis, the faculty found that "significant improvements are needed," particularly in the areas of "identify forces, itemize factors, and evaluate solutions for a given scenario." With this knowledge in mind, the instructors will emphasize case analysis techniques and the decision-making process.

College of Education

- ◆ Dual special education & PK-4 found students struggled with SLO 2 “Understanding of...diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.” Several actions were taken to improve this outcome, including prioritizing TRIO settings so students gain experience in diverse settings, encouraging students to take a specific course to give additional background, and continuing to highlight teacher bias. The program also noted students had difficulty achieving SLO 2.3, “Create and manage a positive classroom.” Again, changes aimed at improving this outcome spanned multiple classes, including SPU 201, 318, 392, and 328.
- ◆ Secondary Education curriculum and instruction found inconsistent results with SLO 1 “able to demonstrate an understanding of how knowledge is gained, how to verify knowledge, and how to judge its value”. With a sample of 15 students using a core project proposal assignment, most students scored highly effective on indicators 1 (100%) and 2 (86%). Only 66% scored highly effective on indicator 3. Faculty met to discuss the rubrics for the third indicator. In addition, some changes to the program are currently in the curricular process which will result in changes to better integrate specializations within the program. The program also evaluated SLO 4 “able to display an awareness of diversity as it relates to classroom curriculum, management, and assessment. Of 16 students, 82% received the highest rubric rating for a core assignment regarding problem solving for social justice, meeting the criterion. Faculty revisited the rubrics for this assignment to ensure that the rubric is up to date and aligned to the SLO.

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

- ◆ In English, students did not meet the criterion for SLO 1, “able to read and interpret texts from diverse genres, historical periods, cultures, and perspectives.” To address this, the program implemented 2 actions. The first was to create a digital repository to share assignments and ideas among faculty. The second action was the creation of workshops for faculty to discuss and improve assignments and teaching practices. (*UPDATE: Both action items have been implemented as of Feb 2022.*)
- ◆ Geography found that students did not meet SLO 1B, “Technical Skills-Geographic Information Systems” as part of GEG 274. Changes to the course were made to ensure that students could access free, online GIS data, and this could occur earlier in the semester so that students had more time for project analysis.
- ◆ In Chemistry, students did not meet the criterion for SLO 1, “to demonstrate an acceptable level of mastery of core chemical principles.” The program uses a standardized exam to test specific content areas. Areas in need of improvement were identified from test scores and then mapped within the curriculum. Actions were taken to address ways to improve curriculum instruction for

those areas and those changes were implemented in Fall 2021 and Spring 2022. *(UPDATE: The next round of testing will take place in Spring 2022 and the program will revisit this assessment process to check for improvement.)*

- ◆ In Anthropology, an assessment of SLO 1 revealed inconclusive results as to whether students are able to “demonstrate the ability to use anthropological concepts and theories to present a holistic and comparative understanding of human biological and cultural diversity.” This was due to several factors including a small sample size; however, faculty recognized areas in which improvements could be made to the program from the data they collected, to wit: consideration of program scaffolding as it correlates to course numbering and student progression through the curriculum. Program faculty have since renumbered and subsequently re-scaffolded the program. The new sequencing went into effect in Fall 2021. *(UPDATE: Faculty continue to review individual course plans to identify areas to improve specific lesson planning and instruction to better fit this new sequencing.)*

College of Visual and Performing Arts

- ◆ In Communication Studies, assessment revealed that the success criterion for SLO 2 “Compose written communication appropriate to specific contexts” was not met. In this analysis, 61% of students (N=23) scored a 2 or higher, not meeting set criterion. Though pandemic concerns may have contributed to the results, the action plan includes a new format for core courses that allows students greater flexibility. These changes were scheduled to begin in the 21-22 academic year, and subsequent assessment can evaluate the impact of the format change.
- ◆ While students in the BFA in Communication Design program met the criteria for SLO 3, “Create and develop visual form in response to communication problems,” faculty noted that students could continue to push themselves regarding diversity, conceptual thinking, and originality in their portfolios. Suggestions for improvement were made even though the criterion was met, and this additional examination is an excellent example of deeper analysis of criteria.

Refining the Assessment Process (Meta-assessment)

- ◆ The Finance program identified potential problems with the assessment measure in the assessment of SLO 2, “Identify the inputs needed to value a financial asset and apply a valuation methodology to estimate and evaluate an asset’s intrinsic value.” In identifying low scores for certain questions, the faculty are considering a variety of factors that may have yielded universally

low results. They have ear-marked these questions and their corresponding content areas and will revisit both the questions and the timing of the assessment for the next round.

- ◆ Although the History program updated their rubrics, the faculty report continued issues with the rubric used for SLO 2, “Students will apply research skills into historical writing,” particularly in Measure 2 (written assignment in HIS 125). Faculty were consulted to revise the rubric for uniformity and consistency across the leveled courses. (*UPDATE: Faculty reported in February 2022, that the rubric has been revised to reflect those changes and will be utilized in the round of assessment for SLO 2.*)
- ◆ In their assessment of SLO 3, “Students will apply mathematics to solve problems,” the mathematics program faculty were hesitant to draw conclusions. Only one problem was submitted as evidence of the student learning outcome and was only marked correct or incorrect. While nearly 70% of the students submitted a “correct” problem, the manner in which they arrived at the problem/approached the assessment varied enough to not reveal how they are learning. The faculty are working on developing a more comprehensive assessment tool that will allow for a more detailed look at process and development rather than “correct” responses.

Developing Practices

- ◆ Business Administration. The Department of Business Administration contains several tracks, many of which have individual accreditation requirements. In many cases, data that was submitted simply noted the achievement of a benchmark with no analysis as to how that could influence pedagogy. Additionally, benchmark criteria seem to be a bit low suggesting that there is in fact room for improvement. Methods tend to be limiting in terms of what data can be revealed, and in some cases, no data was presented.
- ◆ Geology. The program in Geology continues to focus all SLO assessment on a single objective examination method. While this method may indicate success of testing, it does not clearly indicate the success of the overall program instruction. It has been recommended that the comprehensive examination be used as a starting point to identify areas of further consideration, but that future assessments explore alternative assessments that examine student learning within the classroom.

Action Plan and Recommendations

IN THE ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT REPORT AY 19-20, WE ESTABLISHED THE FOLLOWING GOALS:

- ◆ *Work with stand-alone minors to develop assessment plans, using WGS as a pilot due to their exemplary assessment work catalyzed by assessment grants in previous year.*
- ◆ *Connect annual assessment reports to program review.*
 - **Phase One Completed:** As mentioned above, the WGS program not only presented their work at January 2021 Assessment Day, but also wrote their self-study to initiate the academic program review cycle.
- ◆ *Revise AAC feedback rubric, particularly to include longitudinal perspectives on data collection as well as on action plans in response to that data.*
 - **Completed:** The Office of Assessment revised the feedback rubric, which was approved by the AAC and added to the Nuventive framework to provide electronic feedback to all programs. The rubric specifies as exemplary, a program in which “There is evidence of action based on assessment results over time.”
- ◆ *In concert with the JEDI Strategic Initiative, introduce the concept of equity in assessment.*
 - **Completed:** January 2021 Assessment Day featured a keynote on equity in assessment. This topic will continue to be scaffolded in our ongoing professional development.
- ◆ *Involve students more in the assessment process and the dissemination of assessment results and actions.*
 - **Not completed.**

THE NEW GOALS FOR AY 21-22 ARE:

- ◆ *Expand the Assessment Grant program and strengthen its impact*
 - Double the number of grant applications in the AY 21-22
 - Increase the number of collaborative grant proposals (faculty and staff joint projects)
- ◆ *Guide and train the university community at large through sharing of results of assessment projects.*
- ◆ *Continue professional development and mentorship to include equity in assessment practices.*