

Assessment Cycle AC 2020-2021

Louisiana Scholars' College

College: Arts and Sciences

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Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

College of Arts and Sciences' Mission. The College of Arts & Sciences, the largest college at Northwestern State University, is a diverse community of scholars, teachers, and students, working collaboratively to acquire, create, and disseminate knowledge through transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, research, and service. The College strives to produce graduates who are productive members of society equipped with the capability to promote economic and social development and improve the overall quality of life in the region. The College provides an unequalled undergraduate education in the social and behavioral sciences, English, communication, journalism, media arts, biological and physical sciences, and the creative and performing arts, and at the graduate level in the creative and performing arts, English, TESOL, and Homeland Security. Uniquely, the College houses the Louisiana Scholars' College (the State's designated Honors College), the Louisiana Folklife Center, and the Creole Center, demonstrating its commitment to community service, research, and preservation of Louisiana's precious resources.

Louisiana Scholars' College Mission Statement: The College's mission is to provide a quality, customized undergraduate education firmly grounded in the liberal arts and sciences to a diverse population of well-qualified, highly motivated students by rethinking the traditional liberal arts curriculum and developing innovative approaches to honors education.

Louisiana Scholars' College Purpose: As an academic unit, the Louisiana Scholars' College is responsible for:

- administering, delivering, and enhancing courses for the honors core curriculum (the Common Curriculum), which replaces the University Core for students in the College.
- administering, setting standards, delivering, and enhancing courses for the Minor in Liberal Arts and the individualized Major in Liberal Arts and its honors concentrations: Classical Studies; Fine and Performing Arts; Foreign Languages;

Assessment Cycle AC 2020-2021

Humanities and Social Thought; Philosophy, Politics, and Economics; and Scientific Inquiry.

- collaborating with other departments to offer jointly honors versions of 26 traditional majors, each to include the Common Curriculum, a senior thesis, and honors level major courses, as appropriate, in addition to the required courses in each major.
- mentoring students individually in the production of the senior thesis.
- advising all honors students on curricular choices to prepare them for advanced study or employment.

Students completing a concentration in the Major in Liberal Arts use a combination of courses offered in the Scholars' College and approved courses offered in other departments or through study abroad.

Due to the variety of degree options in the College and the flexibility of the Major in Liberal Arts, sample sizes are too small for a meaningful evaluation of Student Learning Outcomes related to specific content imparted in any of these majors. (SLOs related to content in specific joint majors are evaluated in the home departments.) The following assessment evaluates skills-based student learning outcomes common to the Major in Liberal Arts and all of the joint majors administered by the College as demonstrated in courses offered in the College.

Methodology: The assessment process includes:

1. evaluation of components of single assignments in courses required of all students in the College;
2. evaluation of the comprehensive final exam in skills-based courses satisfying options in the Common Curriculum;
3. summative evaluation of the Senior Thesis defense;
4. summative evaluation of the Archival Senior Thesis.

Student Learning Outcomes:

SLO 1. Demonstrate effective oral communication skills.

Through first semester presentation and Thesis Defense.

Measure 1.1. (Direct–Skill/Ability–oral communication)

Students make oral presentations of their term papers in SCRT 181w and the 2000-level co-classes, which are assessed using the AACU *Oral Communication* rubric. The target is for a minimum of 75% of students to earn an average rating of 3 or higher. AC 2018-2019 is the first year we have assessed this class.

Finding: Target met.

Assessment Cycle AC 2020-2021

Analysis: In AC 2019-2020 the target was not met; fewer than 75% of students in SCRT 181W and the 2000-level co-courses earned an average rating of 3 or higher on the 4-point AACU *Oral Communication* rubric. The assessment covered 38 students. Based on the rubric, 75% or more of students scored a 3 or 4 on all subscales: *Organization* (84.2%), *Language* (78.9%), *Delivery* (76.3%), *Supporting Materials* (86.8%), and *Central Message* (84.2%). However, overall, only 71.1% averaged a 3 or above over the 5 subscales, indicating that the lower scores were clustered within a few individuals rather than spread throughout the class.

Oral Communication Scores by Course 2019-2020

subscale	SCRT 181W		S***2000		p
	M	SD	M	SD	
Organization	3.30	0.949	3.34	0.667	0.453*
Language	3.10	0.876	3.21	0.738	0.359*
Delivery	2.85	1.132	3.05	0.671	0.301*
Support	3.15	1.001	3.38	0.675	0.261*
Central Message	3.20	1.033	3.41	0.708	0.281*

*not significant (1-tailed t-test)

In AC 2019-2020, students enrolled in the 2000 level course ($N = 28$) performed comparably to those enrolled in SCRT 181W ($N = 1$) on all five subscales (one-tailed independent samples *t*-test with the Bonferroni correction, i.e., $p < .01$).

Based on the analysis of the 2019-2020 results, the faculty made the following changes to drive the cycle of improvement. A presentation rubric identifying 18 components of the oral presentation with examples of different levels of performance was distributed via Moodle. Example Powerpoints with design problems were shared with the class for their feedback. In addition, each instructor gave an example presentation to their class and asked their class to rate them on their presentation.

As a result of these changes, in 2020-2021 the target was for a minimum of 75% of students in SCRT 181W and the 2000-level co-courses to earn an average rating of 3 or higher on the 4-point AACU *Oral Communication* rubric. The assessment covered 16

Oral Communication Scores by Course 2020-2021

subscale	SCRT 181W		S***2000		p
	M	SD	M	SD	
Organization	3.20	0.274	3.50	0.500	0.073
Language	3.10	0.742	3.18	0.874	0.426
Delivery	3.10	0.224	3.14	0.839	0.448
Support	3.70	0.447	3.18	0.982	> .50
Central Message	3.80	0.447	3.50	0.671	> .50

not significant (1-tailed t-test)

students. Based on the rubric, 75% or more of students scored a 3 or 4 on all subscales: *Organization* (100%), *Language* (75%), *Delivery* (81%), *Supporting Materials* (75%), and *Central Message* (94%). Overall, 81% averaged a 3 or above over the 5 subscales, indicating that the lower scores were spread

throughout the class. This did not differ significantly from the 2019-2020 proportion meeting the target (Two proportion z-test, $p = .217$).

Assessment Cycle AC 2020-2021

In AC 2020-2021, students enrolled in SCRT 181W ($N = 5$) performed comparably to those enrolled in the 2000 level course ($N = 11$) on all of the subscales (one-tailed independent samples t -test with Bonferroni correction, i.e., $p < .01$). The changes appear to have improved the performance of the less experienced students across all subscales. In fact, on the *Supporting Material* and *Central Message* subscales, the averages for the SCRT students were above those for the 2000 level students.

Decision: In 2020-2021 the target was met. Based on the analysis of these results, in AC 2021-2022, to further improve presentations the faculty will continue the steps taken last year. In addition, a video on creating effective Powerpoint slideshows (TED talk: “How to Avoid Death by Powerpoint”) will be distributed to the classes on Moodle. This change is specifically targeted at improving the student’s delivery of oral presentations.

As students move through the curriculum, this assessment will be paired with the Thesis Defense assessment to determine growth in oral communication skills.

Measure 1.2. (Direct–Skill/Ability–oral communication)

Students present oral defenses of their theses, which are assessed using the summative rubric for the department, modified in Spring 2017. The target is for a minimum of 75% of students enrolled in the second semester of thesis to progress to the point where they can defend their work and earn a rating of *very good* or higher. Students who are enrolled but do not successfully defend are rated *unsatisfactory*.

Finding: Target met.

Analysis: In AC 2019-2020 the target was not met. All students are rated for the summative quality of their thesis defenses: *unsatisfactory*, *satisfactory*, *good*, *very good*, *excellent*, or *superlative*. Each rating is based on specific levels of performance, with examples given in a departmental rubric. Each defense is rated by the first and second readers as well as the Director of the College. Of the 21 students completing their theses in the spring semester, 18 (86%) scored 3.0 or higher for their defenses. However, an unusually large number of students (6) did not complete their projects and were thus rated *unsatisfactory*. This reduced the proportion of students earning a *very good* or higher to 18 of 27 (66.7%).

Based on analysis of the AC 2019-2020 data, and in an effort to continuously improve student learning and to ensure that students are completing the thesis defense with adequate preparation on the mechanics of oral presentations, in AC 2020-2021 the faculty provided further support by adding workshops on distance presentations in SLSC 4000 (Thesis Research Methods) in addition to offering individual coaching on presentation skills prior to the defense. Special attention was also given to students struggling to meet thesis deadlines in the spring semester.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2020-2021 the target was a minimum of 75% of students enrolled in the second semester of thesis to progress to the point where they

Assessment Cycle AC 2020-2021

can defend their work and earn a rating of *very good* or higher. Of the 17 students enrolled in the second semester of thesis in spring 2021, 14 defended their theses in the spring semester; of these, 13 (93%) averaged 3.0 or higher for their defenses. Three students did not complete their projects. This reduced the proportion of students earning a *very good* or higher to 13 of 17 (76%). Most students defended their thesis virtually or in a hybrid mode with a face-to-face presentation which was recorded and live streamed so more people could attend. This had the benefit of allowing students in SLSC 4000 (Thesis Research Methods) to review at least two defenses and benefit from critiquing the presentations.

Decision:

In AC 2020-2021 the target was a minimum of 75% of students enrolled in the second semester of thesis to progress to the point where they can defend their work and earn a rating of *Very Good* or higher. Based on the analysis of the 2020-2021 results, the faculty will provide further support in AC 2021-2022 by adding workshops in SLSC 4000 (Thesis Research Methods) about making more professional audio/visual materials and about special considerations for virtual presentations. In addition, faculty mentors will continue to offer individual coaching on presentation skills prior to the defense in AC 2021-2022. Special attention will also be given to students struggling to meet thesis deadlines in the spring semester. Seniors will be encouraged to make presentations of their thesis work in progress at both undergraduate and professional conferences, including the ULL Undergraduate Research Conference, the University of Louisiana System Academic Summit, and NSU's Research Day.

These changes will improve the student's ability to complete work at a professional level in a timely manner and to communicate that work effectively in presentations to a generally educated audience.

SLO 2. Demonstrate effective written communication skills.

Through first semester term paper and Archival Thesis Submission

Measure 2.1 (Direct–Skill/Ability–written communication)

Students write 4,000 word term papers in SCRT 181w and the 2000-level co-courses, which are assessed using the AACU *Written Communication* rubric. The target is for a minimum of 75% of students to earn a rating of 3 or higher on each individual subscale and on the average of the five subscales.

Finding: Target not met.

Analysis: In AC 2019-2020 the target was not met. Based on a 4-point rubric, only 56.4% of students averaged a 3 or above over the 5 subscales. The best performance was on the *Context and Purpose for Writing* subscale, where 32 of 39 students (82.1%)

Assessment Cycle AC 2020-2021

scored a 3 or 4. Students also met the target on the *Sources and Evidence* subscale (76.9% scored 3 or higher). The lowest scores on an individual subscale occurred on *Control of Syntax and Mechanics*, where only 26 of 39 students (66.7%) scored 3 or higher.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 results, the faculty made the following changes in AC 2020-2021 to drive the cycle of improvement. Instructors met privately with each SCRT 181W student after the initial topic/introduction assignment for paper 1 to discuss means to improve the introductory passages of their papers and after the completed first assignment were corrected and returned, to discuss individual weaknesses in grammar, syntax, and mechanics. In individual sections, topics that caused problems for multiple students were addressed in workshop sessions.

As a result of these changes, the target for AC 2020-2021 was for 75% of students to score 3 or higher on each individual subscale and on the average of the five subscales. The best performance was occurred on *Control of Syntax and Mechanics*, where performance improved from the lowest overall in 2018-2019 to 14 of 16 students (88%) scoring 3 or higher. The target was also met on *Context and Purpose* (81%), *Content Development* (75%), and *Sources and Evidence* (75%). The weakest area was *Genre and Disciplinary Conventions* (only 61% scored 3 or higher). Overall, 9 of 16 students (56%) had an average score of 3 or more across the 5 subscales, indicating that the lower scores were clustered in students with more than one weakness. Improvements in three of the weaker subscales suggest that these course changes had a direct impact on the student's ability to write in a style appropriate for their discipline.

Decision: In AC 2020-2021 the target was for 75% of students to score 3 or higher on each individual subscale and on the average of the five subscales. Based on the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, the faculty will widen their focus and add a compilation of the most common syntax and usage errors in the previous and current course to guide workshop discussion and exercises. These changes will improve the student's ability to write more effectively for an audience in their discipline.

Measure 2.2 (Direct–Skill/Ability–written communication)

Students will submit the archival copies of their written theses which will also be assessed using an established rubric. The target is for a minimum of 70% of students to earn a rating of *Excellent* or higher.

Finding: Target not met.

Analysis: In AC 2019-2020 the target was not met. Fewer than 70% of students earned a rating of *Excellent* or higher on the archival thesis; only 12 of 21 completed theses (57.1%) reached this standard.

Based on the analysis of AC 2019-2020 results, the faculty made the following changes in AC 2020-2021. In addition to stressing time management and meeting deadlines in the thesis methods course, submission deadlines were moved earlier in the semester

Assessment Cycle AC 2020-2021

for spring 2021. (These changes were planned for Spring 2020, but the shift to virtual classes led to the need to extend deadlines for some thesis students.)

As a result of these changes, in AC 2020-2021 the target remained for a minimum of 70% of students to earn a summative rating of *Excellent* or higher on the archival thesis; 7 of 14 completed theses (50%) reached this standard, statistically indistinguishable

Rating of Archival Copy 2020-2021			
1 st Reader	2nd Reader	1 st Reader	2nd Reader
Superlative	Superlative	Excellent	Very Good
Superlative	Superlative	Excellent	Very Good
Superlative		Very Good	Excellent
Superlative	Excellent	Very Good	Very Good
Excellent	Superlative	Very Good	Very Good
Excellent	Excellent		Very Good
	Excellent	Good	Very Good

from last year's result. Results may have been affected by the university's closure for Covid-19 in Spring 2020, which came in the crucial period just as students were finalizing their proposals, making collaboration with the thesis director, second reader, other faculty, and other student researchers more difficult. Adjustments and uncertainties during the 2020-2021 academic year due to quarantines and other

health concerns may have made it more difficult for students to focus on a long-term project. Nevertheless, students did improve in their ability to work independently.

Decision: In AC 2020-2021 the target was for 70% of seniors completing their theses to earn a summative rating of at least *Excellent* on their projects. Based on the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, the faculty will introduce more incremental time deadlines for the AC 2021-2022 cohort to drive the cycle of improvement. Time management problems have already been addressed with this cohort in SLSC 4000. In addition to stressing time management and meeting deadlines in the thesis methods course, submission deadlines will be moved earlier in the semester for spring 2022.

SLO 3. Question, analyze, evaluate, and reconcile conflicting perspectives.

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus below.

SCTT 1820: Texts and Traditions II: The Shaping of Western Thought

Measure: 3.1. (Direct – knowledge)

The final exam in *Texts and Traditions II: The Shaping of Western Thought* (SCTT 1820) includes an essay relating the perspectives of one or more major figures from the course to modern perspectives. The target is that 75% of students will earn an average of a B or better on this final exam essay.

Finding: Target met.

Assessment Cycle AC 2020-2021

Analysis: In AC 2019-2020 the target was met. The assessment was based solely on the grade on the essay question directly related to “different perspectives.” All students met the benchmark: of 30 students, 53% rated 10/10, 27% rated 9/10, and 20% rated 8/10. With the exception of two students who stopped attending and thus failed the course, the remaining 25 students earned a course grade of “A.”

The uniformity of scores on this measure made it difficult to identify direction for improvement. Based on the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 results, the faculty had students define one concept—e.g., duty, virtue or justice—fundamental to the work of three major figures active in the Classical world from the time of Sumer to the collapse of the Roman Empire. Throughout the indicated courses, students read and discussed the work of these figures, studying the importance of these concepts to their societies’ understanding of what it means to be “good.” The faculty change the assessment essay to comparing and contrasting both the ancient and the contemporary U.S. perspectives on the concept, explaining how we have maintained, modified or rejected the earlier perspectives.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2020-2021 the target was that 75% of students will earn an average of a B or better on this final exam essay; 14 of 15 students (93%) met this standard, with 73% rating 10/10, 7% rating 9/10, 13% rating 8/10, and 7% rating 5/10. The measure does not identify specific areas of weakness, but anecdotally, faculty noted that responses contained inadequate detail.

Decision: In AC 2020-2021 the target was that 75% of students will earn an average of a B or better on this final exam essay. Based on the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, the faculty will add 4 reflection discussion boards throughout the semester, requiring the students to connect the course theme to the two texts they just finished reading. This should help them do better on the final reflection essay by giving them a chance practicing the work of the assessment in advance, by breaking down the task into manageable chunks, and by giving them a chance to form opinions backed by more concrete detail. The target will be raised to have 80% of students average at least 75% on the rubric total.

In addition, in order to more easily identify specific areas for improvement, one of the AACU rubrics will be used in the future to assess this assignment.

SLO 4. Demonstrate quantitative and problem-solving skills.

Course Map: Tied to course syllabi below.

Applied Statistics (SSTA 3810-01N) and Applied Calculus 1 (SMAT 2000)

Measure 4.1. (Direct – skill/ability)

In the core mathematics course Applied Statistics (SSTA 3810-01N), 75% of students will earn a B or better on a comprehensive assessment of their knowledge and skills.

Assessment Cycle AC 2020-2021

The course final is a comprehensive evaluation of basic descriptive statistics, fundamental hypothesis testing, and advanced topics; analyses are completed in Excel. Students choose and perform the appropriate analyses and interpret their results in the context of the problems.

Finding: Target not met.

Analysis: In AC 2019-2020, the target was met; 14 of 16 students (87.5%) scored 80% or better on the final..

SSTA 3810 Final Exam 2020-2021		
score	freq	%
< 140	2	17%
140-149	1	8%
150-159	2	17%
160-169	2	17%
170-179	1	8%
180-189	2	17%
190-200	2	17%
total	12	

Based on the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 results, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2020-2021 to drive the cycle of improvement. Updated applied statistical examples from a variety of fields represented in the Scholars' College were designed to further emphasize subtle distinctions between techniques and improve performance on routine calculations. In addition, WebEx recordings were made of class lectures on problematic techniques or Excel functions that some students may find difficult to master based on a one-time lecture. These recordings were available throughout the semester via Moodle. It was hoped that these changes would improve the

student's sophistication in dealing with novel hypothesis testing scenarios

In AC 2020-2021 the target remained for 75% of students to earn a score of 80% or better on the comprehensive final exam. Unfortunately, only seven of 12 students (58%) performed at the desired level. The five students who performed below the standard failed to master two basic statistical tests and averaged a D or lower on those problems, in addition to making a variety of other errors. Since similar changes in AC 2019-2020 resulted in a stronger performance on fundamental concepts, further analysis was made to determine a possible cause of these contradictory results.

When additional courseware assignments were added to the course, students were allowed to drop their lowest homework scores, which included courseware assignments and scores for attempting the four sample exams. Since the sample exams force students to distinguish between similar problems, the total score on the sample exams is highly correlated with the final exam score, predicting 74% of the variation in scores ($r = .863$, $r^2 = .744$, $p < .001$). Students who met the target on the final exam scored, on average, 25% higher on the sample exams than those who did not meet the target. (The sample exams are graded on completeness, rather than correctness and measure effort, rather than knowledge.)

Decision: In AC 2020-2021 the target was for 75% of students to earn a score of 80% or better on the comprehensive final exam. Based on the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, the faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2021-2020 to drive the

Assessment Cycle AC 2020-2021

cycle of improvement. To emphasize the importance of completing the sample exams, the grading scale will be adjusted to count all four in the final grade.

Measure 4.2. (Direct – skill/ability)

In the core mathematics courses Applied Calculus 1 (SMAT 2000) and Applied Calculus 2 (SMAT 2010), 75% of students will earn a B or better on a comprehensive assessment of their knowledge and skills.

Finding: Target not met (SMAT 2000)/Target not met (SMAT 2010).

Analysis: In AC 2019-2020 the target was not met in SMAT 2000, with only 6 of 15 (40%) meeting this standard. In SMAT 2010, 8 of 9 (89%) SMAT 2010 students scored above 80% on the final; the remaining student scored 79.5%.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 results, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2020-2021 to drive the cycle of improvement. Rather than producing video Powerpoints, comprehensive, optional WebAssign problem sets (including those with “Master It” video instruction) were provided so students could practice both basic and more complex problems on the course topics. When any student was absent, the lecture was streamed live and recorded. (Each student missed more than a week of classes for excused absences.) Recordings were posted on the course shell and remained available throughout the semester. In addition, students were asked to work problems at the board occasionally, so they could get instant feedback on more tedious problems. (In general, students preferred to watch the instructor work problems, even if the entire class was at the board simultaneously and no one was watching them.)

In AC 2020-2021 the target remained for 75% of students to earn a score of B or better on the comprehensive final exam. As a result of COVID, the incoming class was much smaller than normal and only 3 students completed each of the target courses, so it was impossible to satisfy the goal unless all students met the standard. In both courses only 1 of 3 students met the standard.

Decision: In AC 2020-2021 the target was for 75% of students in SMAT 2000 and SMAT 2010 to earn a B or better on the comprehensive final. Based on the analysis of the 2020-2021 results, the faculty will implement the following changes in 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement. In both courses, additional comprehensive WebAssign resources will be developed to cover additional topics where students may practice additional problems with instant feedback. In SMAT 2010, supplemental materials will be produced covering topics not available in the textbook. Students will also be asked to work at the board more often in the sections on linear algebra and differential equations. These changes will improve the student’s ability to apply concepts correctly in novel situations, making the course more effective and pushing the cycle of improvement forward.

Assessment Cycle AC 2020-2021

SLO 5. Identify connections within and between the sciences, mathematics, humanities, and the arts.

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus below.

SCTT 2820 – Texts and Traditions IV
SLSC 4000 – Thesis Research Methods

Measure 5.1. (Direct – Knowledge)

In SCTT 2820 (Texts and Traditions IV), students will make connections within and between the sciences, mathematics, humanities, and the arts in a summative essay assignment, using works from throughout all four courses in the Texts and Traditions sequence (required of all students). The target is that 75% of students will earn an average score of 3.0 or better, using the AACU Values rubric for *Inquiry and Analysis*.

Finding: Target not met.

Analysis: In AC 2019-2020 the target was not met. Examining each rubric item individually, at least 60% earned a 3 or better on all six items. The best performance was on *Limitations and Implications*, with 28% scoring a 4 and 52% scoring a 3. Students also met the target on the rubric item *Design Process* (76% scored 3 or above). The worst performance was on *Existing Knowledge, Research, or Views*, with 36% earning a 4 and 24% earning a 3.

Based on the analysis of 2019-2020 results, the faculty made the following changes in AC 2020-2021. Greater emphasis was placed on student presentations with the aim of promoting critical thinking and communication skills. More stress was placed for example on the location, analysis, and effective juxtaposition of appropriate secondary sources. As a result of these changes, in 2020-2021 the target was for 75% of students to earn an average score of 3.0 or better, using the AACU Values rubric for *Inquiry and Analysis*. Examining each rubric item individually, only 31% earned a 3 or better on all six items; the best performances occurred on *Topic Selection, Design Process, Conclusions, and Limitations and Implications*, all of which had 9 of 13 (69%) score 3 or 4. The worst performance was on *Analysis*, with only 6 of 13 (46%) earning a 3 or 4.

Not all students were assessed, which may have affected the results. In addition, due to weather disruptions in the spring schedule, less attention may have been devoted to this assessment. It seems unlikely that the curricular changes would have resulted in a lowering of performance between 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.

Decision: Although SLO 5 is emphasized in almost every lecture in the Texts and Traditions sequence, students may need additional guidance on how to make these connections for themselves. Clearer instructions will be given in writing for the final essay in terms of specific expectations for an A level performance, to help students more clearly articulate their research questions and produce works of appropriate (and typically, narrower) scope.

Assessment Cycle AC 2020-2021

Measure 5.2. (Direct – Knowledge)

Through the final presentation and proposal, students will be assessed on their ability to formulate connections as stated in the SLO.

75% of students will earn an average of a B or better on the presentation and final proposal.

Finding: Target met.

Analysis: In AC 2019-2020, the target was met. Two students failed to submit any work. Of the remaining 17 students, 14 (82%) earned an average of a B or better on the proposal (18 points) and presentation (5 points).

Based on the analysis of 2019-2020 results, the faculty made the following changes in AC 2020-2021. Greater emphasis was placed on interdisciplinary components of the thesis and the importance of placing the research in context, especially in the written document. Additional coaching was provided on identifying a better selection of sources to provide more interdisciplinary context or connections between time periods. The assessment for this SLO was not changed.

SLSC 4000/SBUS 4000 Presentation and Proposal Spring 2021		
score	#	freq.
< 50%	0	0.00%
50-59%	1	7.14%
60-69%	1	7.14%
70-79%	1	7.14%
80-89%	1	7.14%
90-100%	10	71.43%
total	14	

As a result of these changes, in 2020-2021 the target was for 75% of students to earn an average of 80% or better on the final proposal and presentation. One student failed to attend for most of the semester and did not submit any work for the course; this student was excluded from the analysis. Of the remaining 14 students, 11 (79%) earned an average of a B or better on the proposal (20 points) and presentation (5 points). All students scored 88% or higher on the oral presentation.

Decision: Further emphasis on commonalities between research in different disciplines and the interconnectedness of scholarship across the disciplines will be added to SLSC/SBUS 4000 to further drive improvement in student learning.

Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvement based on analysis of results:

1. For SLO1 and SLO2, the performance of first year students with less writing and presentation experience (SCRT 181W) increased to the same level as those entering the College with credit for ENGL 1020. In addition, the targets were

Assessment Cycle AC 2020-2021

increased to include performance on each subscale as well as the summative performance and this new target was met for most subscales.

2. For SLO1 the performance of seniors on their thesis defense improved for those completing their projects, even when including those who did not finish in the measure (as unsatisfactory).
3. For SLO3, the performance of students on the essay assessment remained high, although the current measure is not able to distinguish areas of relative weakness and targets for improvement.
4. For SLO 4, in SMAT 2000, the class size ($n = 3$) made it difficult to draw any statistically valid conclusions. In SSTA 3810, students who were actively engaged in the course did well, while those who did not attempt, complete, or submit the homework assignments did very poorly, indicating that the assignments were effective.
5. For SLO5, in SLSC 4000/SBUS 4000 students continued to perform at a high level in making connections in their thesis proposals, both written and oral, even as standards increased.
6. The targets were met for SLO1, SLO3, and one measure of SLO5. To help us improve, targets were adjusted to be more aspirational or measures were adjusted to be more inclusive or more focused. All but SLO3 now has two measures and data is being collected to allow for longitudinal analysis.

Curricular and instructional changes in AC 2020-2021

- Individual writing instruction was conducted in each section of SCRT 181W. Increased uniformity in feedback and intervention in SCRT 181W was also implemented.
- Thesis students were given additional coaching on their presentations.
- The new configuration of SCTT 1810 and 1820 was taught for the third time and adjustments made. In particular, discussion sessions were linked more strongly to the course themes.
- The new configuration of SCTT 2810 and 2820 was taught for the second time in AC 2020-2021. An emphasis was placed on critical thinking, communication skills, and the appropriate use of secondary sources.
- In the quantitative courses (SSTA 3810, SMAT 2000, and SMAT 2010), additional courseware-based homework assignments were added to provide students with more practice problems at more regular intervals. The timing of assignment submission was altered to provide more time for questions.

Assessment Cycle AC 2020-2021

- New content on research planning, time management, asynchronous presentation, and creating more effective presentation materials was added to SLSC/SBUS 4000.

Plan of action moving forward

- Emphasis on oral communication will be increased in SCRT 181W/S*** 2000.
- Emphasis on virtual presentations will be added to SLSC 4000/SBUS 4000.
- Special attention will be given to thesis students struggling to meet deadlines in the spring semester.
- Writing instruction in SCRT 181W/S*** 2000 will include more emphasis on syntax and usage errors common to the subject matter of the course.
- In SCTT 1820, students will define one concept to focus on when reading and discussing the works of three major figures and connect these concepts to the associated societies' understanding of what it means to be "good."
- In SSTA 3810, SMAT 2000, and SMAT 2010, brief Powerpoint videos will be produced covering difficult topics. In addition, in SSTA 3810, additional homework problems leading to better understanding of subtle distinctions in problem types will be developed.
- Continued refinements to the QEP assessments and courses will affect SLO 1, 2, and 5.
- Pairing of data from first year courses to senior courses will be possible in AC 2021-2022.