Faculty Senate Core Curriculum Committee

Assessment Report

2019-2020

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Overview

The Core Curriculum Committee is the reviewing and recommending body for the university-wide undergraduate Core Curriculum, including the institution and implementation of ongoing assessment methods for evaluating the Core's efficacy.

For the 2019-2020 AY, the Core Curriculum Committee reviewed departmental assessment reports that were submitted between 2016 and 2019. In addition to its other duties of reviewing curriculum, the committee met bi-monthly in the spring semester and collectively reviewed the assessment reports for over 104 courses. From that review, the committee identified key trends in both the methodology and data used for Core assessment.

This report for the 2019-2020 academic year reviews two aspects of the university Core: (1) strengths and weaknesses in our current assessment methodology, and (2) specific data from past reports. Our goal with this report is to improve the evaluation process for courses within the Core Curriculum and to improve the quality, validity, and reliability of the data gathered in the future, so that it can be effectively used to improve Core curricular instruction at the University of Toledo.

Part One

Summary. The current Core assessment process asks departments to provide annual assessment reports of Core courses that link to one or more student learning outcomes from the course to the two Core Curriculum outcomes that most closely align with them. The assessment form asks a series of specific questions about each department's assessment of the course, including how departments measure the achievement of the outcomes and to identify action item(s) that the department can address in the coming year. The form also asks the department to summarize how it addressed information from last year: what were the results

of their analysis and how were those results used to help the department to improve subsequent outcomes in its Core curriculum offerings.

Strengths. Current assessment methods have some strengths, including:

- **Transparency in the reporting mechanism.** The data from each department's assessment report are posted online to permit other committees and reviewing bodies access so that they can read and review the reports.

- **The reporting mechanism is relatively simple and user friendly**.

- **The report requires departments to demonstrate a clear connection between the broad outcomes of the Core and individual course outcomes.** It also asks departments to identify specific strategies for measuring those outcomes. (The quality of these responses varies, as evident in the next section.)

- **High quality reports inform change in instructional strategies.** It is clear that accurate and detailed information about student learning in courses that produce high quality reports is effectively used to inform changes in testing and teaching strategies, including altering means of presentation and emphasis in content or skills in which students have difficulty or do not show sufficient progression.

Weaknesses. The overriding weakness of our current assessment practices is that they do not yield enough useable data.

Weaknesses in our *process* include:

- **Inconsistent responses.** Some departments respond to requests for assessment data while others do not. Data are spotty, making it difficult to identify university-wide trends.

- **Diffuse responsibility.** There is no clear hierarchy or structure for assessment of the Core, since its courses are spread across multiple departments.

- **Report form currently used includes some misleading instructions for certain questions**. Broad questions need to be eliminated from the report, or written in a more specific manner to gain the desired information from the departments. For example, departments often interpreted the question about student strengths and weaknesses more generally instead of tying those strengths and weaknesses to the Core student learning outcomes for the course.

- **Lack of response to data.** For many courses, there is little evidence that changes are being made in response to the reports.

Weaknesses in our *data* include:

- **Lack of clarity regarding what is being assessed and the method or process for conducting that assessment.** For example, some reports will refer to "an assignment" that was assessed, but there does not appear to be an obvious connection to the student learning outcome. If a connection exists, the report does not articulate it.

- **Lack of specific data.**

    - **Lack of clarity regarding what is being assessed and the method or process for conducting that assessment.** For example, some reports will refer to "an assignment" that was assessed, but that is all the information provided.

    - **Lack of quantitative evaluations.** For example, in some evaluations, if the assignment being assessed was given to students, the report failed to note information such as the number of evaluations. Not knowing the sample size renders the report far less valuable.

- **Confusion about the difference between affective and cognitive outcomes.** Reports demonstrate a lack of clarity about the difference between knowledge that is associated with attitudes, feelings, or disposition and knowledge that is associated with specific skills and understanding of the pedagogical content.

- **Uneven reporting on individual Core outcomes.** The data collected tend to cluster around specific outcomes from the Core, with much emphasis on certain Core outcomes and not enough on others. For example, if we have 15 departments reporting on critical thinking and only one reporting on information literacy, it distorts our understanding of whether or not all five learning outcomes in the Core Curriculum are being met.

Part Two

Below is an example of summary data related to the Core courses offered by the Mathematics and Art departments. Select data from the past three annual assessment cycles are compiled from the annual Core Curriculum assessment reports available through the institution's online assessment tracking tool. Your department's data is included in **Appendix A.**

Mathematics Department

MATH 1180: Reasoning with Mathematics

Assessment Report Data

	2018-2019			2017-2018			2016-2017		
% of students who met expectations with respect to each aligned core outcome	Exceeds %	Met %	not met %	Exceeds %	Met %	not met %	Exceeds %	Met %	not met %
Scientific & Quantitative Reasoning & Literacy	0	64	36	0	60	40	0	51	49
Student Strengths	Hard working and eager to learn mathematics in a new environment			The students are naturally curious and excited to be in a more practical feeling math class. For the most part, they are independent and try to figure things out on their own.			Students were strongest with budgets. They collaborated well together and expressed interest in the material. The students were also able to identify different types of functions.		
Student Weaknesses	Group collaboration continues to be a struggle for many students. It is hard for them to understand appropriate interaction and still feel that they are being graded fairly			Group collaboration remains to be a problem. Either they do not communicate enough or they do not seem to handle a quiet group member constructively. Rather than to attempt to kindle dialogue, they would rather to merely complain.			Students seem to have poor calculation and written skills. They did not always express understanding of the material in a well-written way. They were unable to come up with the equations for specific functions.		
Action Items	We are continuing to work on ways to improve the culture of the class to help group work and trying to come up with ideas to motivate our students. We created a new final exam this semester in hopes that it will give us a better idea of how well our students are able to			We are currently revamping milestones and a rating system to hold students more accountable to group participation.			There will be clearer expectations of group dynamics. There will also be more concise grading rubrics, more organized questioning techniques and more emphasis on their communication deficiencies.		

	reason. I think we need to rethink how we assess these students, maybe creating something through out the semester.		
Action Items (Previous Year)	We revamped the milestones, weighting of categories in the overall grade, attendance policy, some of the quizzes, and the final exam. We believe it is holding the individual more accountable. But there is always a few students in class that are hard to motivate. To help better assess them, we created a new final that is part take home and part in class. However, since the final exam is only worth 10%, students were choosing not to take part of the exam, knowing it would not affect there grade. So the assessments are not accurate.	We will be having co-req in all sections with a strict attendance policy. This should allow groups more chances to meet and to isolate truly inactive students. dialogue, they would rather merely complain.	There was a pilot this academic year to change the 1180 course to quantitative reasoning, which has become a permanent change. This change has given us new action items to work on for the next year.

* no data

Mathematics Department

MATH 1320: College Algebra

Assessment Report Data

	2018-2019			2017-2018			2016-2017		
% of students who met expectations with respect to each aligned core outcome	Exceeds %	Met %	not met %	Exceeds %	Met %	not met %	Exceeds %	Met %	not met %
Scientific & Quantitative Reasoning & Literacy	0	63	37	0	61	39	0	63	37
Student Strengths	1.Most students are able to follow procedures and recognize patterns. 2.They can apply transformations to graphs of functions and can evaluate functions given constant values.			Most students are able to follow procedures and recognize patterns. They can apply transformations to graphs of functions and can evaluate functions given constant values.			Most students are able to follow procedures and recognize patterns. They can apply transformations to graphs of functions and can evaluate functions given constant values.		
Student Weaknesses	1. Students prefer to memorize patterns rather			1. Students have trouble applying concepts,			Students have trouble applying concepts,		

	than apply concepts and struggle with minor changes in wording or notation. 2. Have forgotten basic arithmetic skills (fraction arithmetic, times tables, etc.)	methods and procedures to unfamiliar problems. They have a tendency to memorize particular patterns rather than apply concepts and struggle with minor changes in wording or notation. 2. Many students are dependent on a calculator for basic arithmetic. 3. Poor attendance of weak students. 4. Wide range of skills within the same class section.	methods and procedures to unfamiliar problems. They have a tendency to memorize particular patterns rather than apply concepts and struggle with minor changes in wording or notation. Many students are dependent on a calculator for basic arithmetic. Poor attendance of weak students. Wide range of skills within the same class section.
Action Items	1. Continue with co-remediation	1. Highly coordinated course, which all sections are following the same pacing and format. 2. Add co-remediation sections for students with ACT < 22. 3. Early intervention for underprepared/weak students (Starfish/Success Coaches).	Highly coordinated course, which all sections are following the same pacing and format. Study Tables (including grade incentives for attendance). Early intervention for underprepared/weak students (Starfish/Success Coaches).
Action Items (Previous Year)	We continue to develop co-remediation. The data suggests this is helping, but nothing can be said conclusively yet.	Co-Requisite sections will be implemented and tested this Fall.	Co-remediation (Co-Requisite) was postponed due to scheduling and budget constraints.

* no data

Mathematics Department

MATH 1730: Calculus with Applications to Business and Finance

Assessment Report Data

	2018-2019			2017-2018			2016-2017		
% of students who met expectations with respect to each aligned core outcome	Exceeds %	Met %	not met %	Exceeds %	Met %	not met %	Exceeds %	Met %	not met %
Scientific & Quantitative Reasoning & Literacy	0	74	26	0	67	33	0	66	34
Student Strengths	Finding derivatives (objective 2)			Finding derivatives			Objective 2: Derivatives is always the strongest objective because it is covered early in the year and repeated throughout.		
Student Weaknesses	Algebra / Finding Integrals (objective 3)			Finding integrals			1.Students whose Algebra skills are too weak to handle Calculus. 2.For some students, poor study habits, motivation and attendance, and homework procrastination and incompletion hamper their success in this course. 3.Objective 3: Is the weakest objective.		
Action Items	We're re-configuring the curriculum to fit into the new structure of 4 instructor hours + 1 recitation hour. We are hoping this will allow more time to introduce new concepts and work with students directly, and also allow us to reach the objective 3 portion of the curriculum earlier so students have more time to master this, since objective 3 assessment results are always substantially lower than the other two. Also note that the department has begun introducing co-			We are considering changing the format of this class in Fall 2019 to allow more contact hours with the instructor, since many of the students struggle with the calculus concepts and end up having to repeat the class. We also have a new prerequisite of ACT 24 (previously ACT 22) for direct entry to this course which lines up with the prerequisite requirements of most of other Ohio Universities.			Our Department has a new pre-requisite minimum of C- in College Algebra before taking this course, for students required to take College Algebra. The old pre-requisite was D-. Since students enroll in this course before final grades are posted, the department challenge will be to locate the unqualified students and ensure they return to re-take the prerequisite course. Hopefully having better-prepared students will help with our success rates.		

	requisite lab sections for weaker College Algebra students. We may begin to see some effects of this in2019-2020 as students who are required to take College Algebra first should be coming to Calculus better prepared.		We are going to try shorter homework deadlines in some of our sections to attempt to discourage procrastination. Although we would like to allow more time for objective 3, this will prove an additional challenge with the shortened schedule and one less week of class time.
Action Items (Previous Year)	We had a new ACT 24 prerequisite this fall along with the C- minimum in College Algebra prerequisite fully enforced for the full year. The results were dramatic. We had an approximately 10% score increase in both objectives 2 and 3, Derivatives and Integrals, the two foundational key concepts of any calculus course. We were able to schedule a new format for the course that will begin Fall 2019, where we have 4 instructor hours + 1 recitation hour, instead of 3 + 2. Since this doesn't start until the fall, we have no results yet.	Spring 2018 was the first semester the new C- prerequisite for College Algebra was enforced. Our Spring scores were significantly stronger than previous years, and even stronger than the fall semester even though spring semester generally has a mathematically weaker student population in this course.	Although the new C- pre-requisite was official by spring semester, because of its last-minute approval it was felt that much lenience should be used and students only be encouraged but not forced to repeat pre-requisite courses. As a result, no difference was noted. Hopefully now that it is to be fully enforced we will see better prepared students in Math 1730.

* no data

Art Department

Art History 1500: Art in History

Assessment Report Data

	2018-2019			2017-2018			2016-2017		
% of students who met expectations with respect to each aligned Core outcome	Exceeds %	Met %	not met %	Exceeds %	Met %	not met %	Exceeds %	Met %	not met %
Critical Thinking	70	20	10	77	21	2	*	*	*
Communication	80	15	5	71	26	3	*	*	*

Information Literacy	*	*	*	*	*	*	82	7	11
Student Strengths	Curiosity about new ideas			Curiosity about new ideas The willingness to engage topical issues and connect them to historical material covered by the class and textbook, especially prominent during the weekly discussions on Blackboard and/or in the classroom.			1. Curiosity about new ideas 2. The willingness to engage topical issues and connect them to historical material covered by the class and textbook, especially prominent during the weekly discussions on Blackboard and/or in the classroom.		
Student Weaknesses	Some students had difficulty balancing school work with life/work outside of school.			Some students had difficulty balancing school work with life/work outside of school. Some students are not quite ready for college. The inability to offer comprehensive analysis and interpretation of works as well as logical, coherent, and persuasive arguments during exam essays.			1. Some students had difficulty balancing school work with life/work outside of school. 2. Some students are not quite ready for college. 3. The inability to offer comprehensive analysis and interpretation of works as well as logical, coherent, and persuasive arguments during exam essays.		
Action Items	As the results of the assessment of this course exceeded expectations, the assessment committee agrees that no actions need to be taken at this time. We will continue to assess this course and compare next year's results to this year.			As the results of the assessment of this course exceeded expectations, the assessment committee agrees that no actions need to be taken at this time. We will continue to assess this course and compare next year's results to this year.			1. Going forward, we will change the GE learning outcome for ARTH 1500 from "Information Literacy" to Communication and Critical Thinking and Integrative Learning . The faculty who teach ARTH 1500 identified these GE outcomes as more accurately reflecting the outcomes of the course. 2. Moving forward the assessment committee will request that all faculty who teach ARTH 1500 assess the complete results of at least one written assignment for Communication and Critical Thinking and		

			Integrative Learning using the following standards. Both outcomes will be assessed individually. 4 = Exceeds Expectations (87-100%) 3 = Meets Expectations (86 -73%) 2 = Developing (72-60%) 1 = Inadequate (59-0%) 3. The assessment data for the 2017-18 report will be an aggregate of the data collected using item 2 above.
Action Items (Previous Year)	Not applicable. No actions were taken last year.	Last year we reported that we would modify our assessment process. These modifications were utilized this year and will continue to be utilized going forward. Please see last years report for details on these modifications.	No changes were made last year. We will report on the changes made this year in the 2017-18 report.

* no data

Art Department

ART 1110 : Art Journey

By Instructor	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
	*	*	*
By Modality	**2018-2019**	**2017-2018**	**2016-2017**
Online	*	*	*
Face to Face	*	*	*
Assessment Report Data			
Year	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Rationale for Declined Report	This course has not been taught since 2017	The course was not taught this academic year.	*

* no data

Recommendations

Our current Core assessment methods could benefit from:

- **A process that establishes accountability.** The Core assessment process currently lacks any systemized steps for responding to the data collected about Core courses. Because most of the feedback for assessment reports remains internal within departments, which means they lack the benefit of outside support for areas they wish to improve. We would cite the university program review process as an example of a system that helps to acknowledge that information has been received and that specific steps have been taken in response. The Provost meets with deans, department heads, and a committee, and a specific plan is generated.

- **A single assessment coordinator of the Core Curriculum,** meaning an individual dedicated to coordinating between departments, supporting departmental reporting, and reporting to the Faculty Senate Core Curriculum Committee. The current structure, where the entire weight of managing the Core is placed on a Faculty Senate committee that must be populated on a yearly basis and which has regular leadership changes from year to year, is less effective than it could be.

- **A single assessment coordinator per department,** meaning an individual dedicated to supporting departmental reporting and reporting assessment data. This individual should receive support from the department to manage this work.

- **Revision of some instructions in the assessment questionnaire.** Some answers did not comment directly on student learning outcomes or even factors influencing student learning within the course. Changing some of the questions will improve the quality of the reports; better guidance within the question will help to improve responses.

- **Coordinated discussion of Core assessment data within college and departmental retention committees.** The Core Curriculum Committee did not include DFW rates with its assessment data because we believe that the Committee should focus on learning outcomes only. It is important to distinguish between assessment of learning outcomes and other measurements of student success, such as grades. At the same time, we recognize that because Core courses are often—although not always—taken early in a student's academic career, they can play an important role in student retention. We suggest that colleges and departments look closely at their core courses not only in terms of their assessment of student learning outcomes but also within the context of student success as it is more broadly defined.