KU Degree-Level Assessment Examples

Fall 2015

Highlights based on the following KU degree-level assessment examples:

1. Set clear standards/criteria for each learning outcome to make program/course expectations visible to your students. Those criteria are the foundation of your assessment of student learning.
2. If rubrics are used, try to make the criteria coherent and specific. Very broad and general criteria won't provide too much diagnostic and actionable information.
3. Involve students in the assessment process so that they share the responsibility of learning, and include their insights to help you improve your curriculum and courses.
4. Sample size will help you determine whether you want to use descriptive or numeric evidence.
5. Student perceptions of their learning can provide valuable insights on the learning process. Combined with direct measures like course assignments or capstone projects, data collected by surveys, interviews, progress reports, and self-reflections can be informative.
6. How you present assessment data can impact the effectiveness of communication and use of assessment results among faculty members. Data is easier to understand if the data are broken down to show information for different dimensions of learning outcomes.
7. Faculty meetings should be included in any assessment process to build the connection between assessment and improvement of student learning.
8. Sharing ways of teaching and assessing student learning outcomes among colleagues is a great team-building exercise.
9. Technology, if used properly, can facilitate the implementation and use of assessment.
10. There is no one-size-fits-all model for assessment. Adapt assessment methods accordingly based on your department's culture, constraints, and needs.
11. Keep students in mind when the assessment process is planned and implemented. Assessment is not only a documenting process, but also a great way to communicate expectations and feedback to your students.

1. Environmental Studies BA Program

Key Words: Interdisciplinary program; Faculty involvement; Team-building; Assignment repository; Use of course-level assessment for program assessment

As the winner of the 2015 Assessment Award, the Environmental Studies BA program carried out their program assessment with broad input from their faculty. They collected written assignments from their core courses to assess one of their learning outcomes, communication skills. When they realized that those assignments came in different formats, they embraced the difference and engaged faculty in sharing their diverse practices in teaching communication skills. They explained, "It became clear that while all of the courses involve some form of oral demonstration of knowledge, these are not regularly assigned in courses formally. Our discussion, thus, focused on sharing what is done in each course in which written and oral work to assess student learning, and what techniques professors were using as of late to help improve the overall quality of student work." One of the suggestions that resulted from their assessment process is to build an assignment repository so that faculty can share student work and standards for evaluation. Thus, the assessment process is no longer solely a data collection task; instead, it facilitates collaborations and communications among faculty across the curriculum.

More information about this assessment process can be found at http://assessment.ku.edu/2015-degree-level-assessment-winner.

2. Germanic Languages and Literatures BA Program

Key Words: Humanities; Calibrating departmental standards; Secondary evaluations, Use of Blackboard Outcome Assessment tool; Rubrics; Use of assessment to inform curriculum reform

A secondary evaluation process (i.e., student work collected from multiple courses are evaluated independently by at least two faculty members, preferably not the course instructor) is used by the Germanic Languages and Literatures BA program for a few reasons. As a small program, assessment is handled by their Undergraduate Studies Committee, and the evidence collected from one course for one learning outcome is usually limited each semester. In order to have enough data for their assessment, they need to involve multiple courses that contribute to the same learning outcome over time. Meanwhile, evaluation criteria for student work from different courses need to be calibrated at the program level to help faculty reach consensus regarding their expectations and understanding of student learning. To streamline their secondary evaluation process, in fall 2014, the department participated in a pilot of the Blackboard Outcome Assessment tool to move their entire assessment process online (degree-level assessment and KU Core assess), and they continued with their experiment in spring 2015 and fall 2015.

This assessment process has been presented at the 2015 KU Teaching Summit.

3. Chemistry BS/BA Program

Key Words: Natural Sciences; Use of direct and indirect measures; Rubric-based assessment; Integration of KU Core and degree-level assessment

While direct measures such as course assignments and projects provide direct evidence of student achievement of learning outcomes, indirect measures like student surveys, progress reports, and student reflection statements also shed light on the learning process to help instructors understand how students learned and why they learned what they learned. Putting indirect and direct evidence together can help triangulate different sources of data to enhance accuracy of the inquiry. Chemistry's example demonstrates how they utilized both indirect and direct assessment measures in their assessment process. When they put evidence from both sources together, Chemistry faculty discovered that "the students perhaps have overestimated their competency in various areas, but there is no obvious discrepancy between the student self-assessment and that provided by the instructors in their capstone courses." Below is a quick overview of Chemistry's assessment plan.

Measure	Instrument	Course	Program LOs	KU Core
Oral presentations	Rubric	500-level interdisciplinary	LO 1-4	Goal 6
Written and oral reports on open-ended chemical problems	Rubric	Capstone	LO 1-6	Goal 6
Exit survey	SALG		LO 1-6	

4. Dance BA Program

Key Words: Creative disciplines; Rubric; Faculty review of student performance, Student reflections; Student self-review report; Student performance recording; Multiple assessment methods

Dance department collected evidence from multiple sources to inform not only their assessment but also their Annual Student Review. Besides the traditional assessment methods commonly used in other disciplines, including faculty review of student annual progress, student self-evaluations, and course assignments and projects, the Dance Department also implemented the Focus Innovations video software in a few classrooms to capture student performance in videos. Dance faculty explained, "Students enjoy seeing and analyzing their performance on video, in dialogue with their instructor." Realizing that "our students do not share our assumptions and are not necessarily aware of our expectations," Dance faculty used this recording technology to make learning and expectations more visible for their students.

Self-reflection and self-evaluation is another big component in the Dance Department's assessment process. They have established a system to track student learning progress and allow faculty mentors to provide feedback to students on an annual basis. Some of their student-provided review documents are provided below for your reference:

Senior Project Reflection Prompt Questions

1. What was your original conception of the work? What were the ideas or themes you wanted to explore?
2. How did your idea change during the development of the work?
3. If you had a chance to perform the work again, what would you change?
4. Describe the development of your movement language for the work. How did you arrive at a movement vocabulary to represent your ideas?
5. What elements of the composition series have been integrated into this work? Please give examples.
6. How did you incorporate lessons about the use of space and groupings of bodies in the creation of your work?
7. What feedback from faculty has been incorporated into the work? What ideas did you try, but discarded, and why?
8. Describe your preparation for rehearsals and your communication with dancers. What lessons did you learn during this project?
9. How did you arrive at your decisions regarding sound, costumes and lighting? How did these decisions affect the choreography as a whole?
10. Describe how you developed the title for the work and its relationship to the choreography.

Student Sophomore Review Self-Evaluation Form

Student Name: _____Date of Review: _____

Please respond completely and thoroughly to the following prompts. Although the list of questions is one page long, once you answer the questions, the self-evaluation may take a few pages. Allow yourself the space you need to respond thoroughly.

1. Attach a list of all dance courses completed to date, as well as currently enrolled courses.
2. Evaluate your performance in each course. What sort of efforts did you make to go beyond the basic requirements for each course? Please be specific.
3. As you consider your performance in dance courses, where are you succeeding? Where could you improve?
4. What goals did you set for yourself when you came to KU? How successful have you been in achieving those goals? Have your goals changed, and how?
5. What specific objectives would you like to achieve regarding your course work for the next year?
6. What are your ideas for life after graduation?

5. East Asian Languages and Culture MA Program

Key Words: Languages and culture program; Graduate program; Small sample size; Qualitative assessment approach

With two master's degree students who defended during the assessment period (fall 2013 and spring 2014), the EALC MA program used a qualitative approach to document student performance in their theses, based on a set of evaluation criteria. In a situation like this, a points-based grading system is not appropriate. Instead, a detailed feedback report (see the template below) provided by the thesis committee turned out to be more useful and informative for the students. This criteria-based evaluation of a thesis and defense helped the department calibrate expectations on quality of student work; as a result, they have decided to refine their assessment methods, especially in terms of defining a coherent and consistent set of criteria.

Thesis and Defense Report Template

Introduction of the Thesis:

EALC Assessment Guidelines – the graduate student is expected to

1. demonstrate mastery of the key concepts and major works of the field of the student's specialization

   Comment:

2. demonstrate a functional ability to use English and one East Asian language with precision and fluency to read primary and/or secondary texts.

   Comment:

3. explain literary, textual, cultural, socio-political or linguistic topic using appropriate analytic and synthetic strategies in effective oral and written communication.

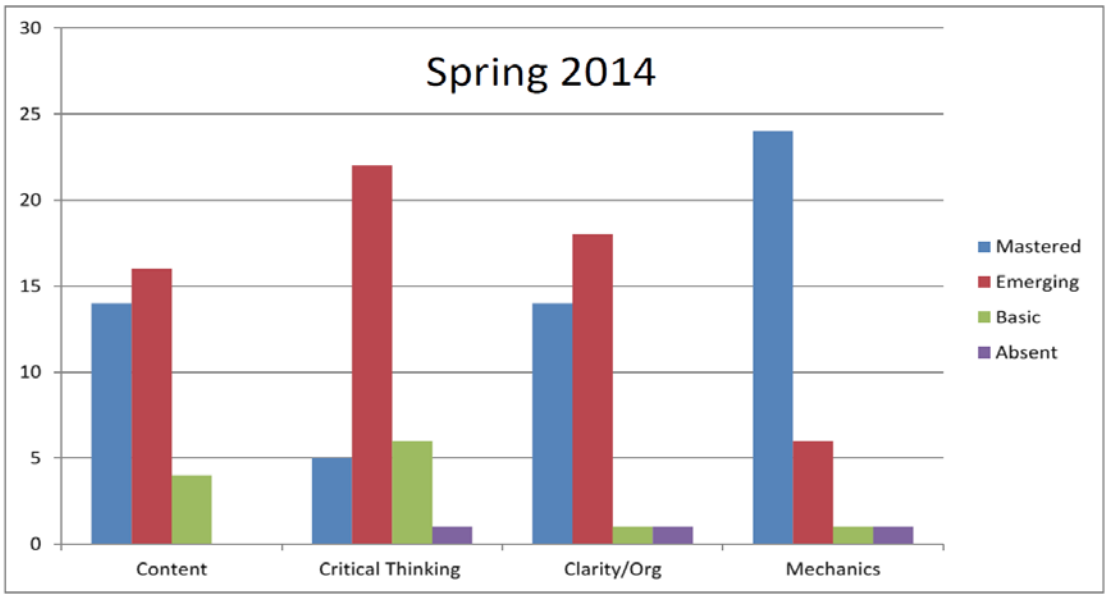
   Comment:

6. Speech, Language and Hearing BA/BGS Program

Key Words: Social sciences; Use of rubric; Data analysis and interpretation

SPLH BA/BGS program used rubrics to assess their learning outcomes, including research skills and communication skills. In this example, the SPLH department organized and presented their assessment results in such an effective way that their faculty can easily and clearly pinpoint areas for improvement. With their rubric data, they presented distributions of student performance levels across all dimensions of the learning outcomes, and they tracked student growth over time by comparing data from different semesters on the same scale. Here are a couple of examples of how SPLH organized their assessment data:

Data from SPLH 660 (n = 34 students)



SPLH 497 & SPLH 498 Data (n = 19 students)

	Outstanding - 3	Acceptable - 2	Unacceptable - 1
Connections within/across disciplines (Introduction)	*Summary* of the relevant literature, including synthesis of an appropriate *array* of areas within/across disciplines	*Summary* of the relevant literature, including synthesis of a *narrow array* of areas within/across disciplines	*Cursory summary* of the relevant literature, *failing to make connections* across different areas within/across disciplines
Fall 2013 (n = 4)	25%	75%	0%
Spring 2014 (n = 15)	27%	73%	0%
2013-2014 Combined (n = 19)	***26%***	***74%***	***0%***
Innovative Thinking (Purpose/Question/Statement of the Problem)	*Indepth understanding* of the problem; *Strong* rationale; *Poses* a novel question	*Adequate understanding* of the problem; *Adequate* rationale; *Applies* an existing question to a similar topic/population	*Lack of understanding* of the problem; *Inadequate* rationale; *Replicates* an existing question without modification
Fall 2013 (n = 4)	50%	50%	0%
Spring 2014 (n = 15)	20%	80%	0%
2013-2014 Combined (n = 19)	***26%***	***74%***	***0%***