

UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
Feedback to Academic Departments on Assessment Activities Reported in 2009-2010* Annual Reports
GRADUATE PROGRAMS

DEPARTMENT Criminal Justice **DATE** May 3, 2011

COMMITTEE MEMBER(S) CONDUCTING REVIEW Eric E. Johnson, Barbara Combs, Raina Urton

1. STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| • Were any goals referenced? | YES <u>X</u> | NO <u> </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u> </u> |
| • If so, were goals well articulated? | YES <u>X</u> | NO <u> </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u> </u> |
| • Do goals address student learning? | YES <u>X</u> | NO <u> </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u> </u> |

Comments:

The Criminal Justice department articulates 13 student learning goals distributed across four categories. Some of these goals may be too abstract to serve as a foundation for meaningful assessment. For example, some goals call for students to have an “appreciation for” various matters. Correspondingly, there is a lack of descriptive language specifying what “appreciation for” means in terms of measurable attributes. It is noted, however, that the department’s assessment plan specifies particular objectives for goals, thus ameliorating this concern to a degree.

2. ASSESSMENT METHODS

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|--|-----------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Were any specific assessment methods referenced? | YES <u>X</u> | NO <u> </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u> </u> |
| • If so, were specifically chosen assessment methods appropriately aligned with individual goals? | YES <u> </u> | NO <u> </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>X</u> |
| • Were both direct and indirect assessment methods used as components of a “multiple measures” approach? | YES <u> </u> | NO <u>X</u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u> </u> |

Comments:

The Criminal Justice department collects data from comprehensive exams as its primary assessment method; although successful dissertation defense is noted for some of the goals in the assessment plan. There does not appear to be any use of indirect assessment. Additionally, it appears that assessment takes place at or near the end of the program rather than periodically throughout.

* At the time of the Committee’s review, the Criminal Justice department had not yet posted its Annual Report for the FY2010 (2009-2010) year. The Committee was separately provided with a document labeled “Criminal Justice Assessment 2010” (referred to herein as the “FY2010 document”) for its review in the preparation of this feedback memorandum. This report has been prepared by referencing the FY2010 document.

3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Were any assessment results reported?	YES ____	NO <u>X</u> ____	QUALIFIED Y/N ____
• If so, were the results clear in terms of how they specifically affirm achievement of goals?	YES ____	NO ____	QUALIFIED Y/N ____
• If so, were the results clear in terms of how they indicate need for improvement?	YES ____	NO ____	QUALIFIED Y/N ____
• Were the results tied to goals for student learning?	YES ____	NO ____	QUALIFIED Y/N ____

Comments:

Based on the materials available to the Committee, it appears that no graduate students have taken comprehensive exams in the past few years. In the FY2010 document, the Criminal Justice department reported: "Given that we are a relatively new program, only one full set of comprehensive exams has been taken thus far and that was only by one of the students, which also had courses at other institutions. At this point we know the individual student's strengths and weaknesses and we are dealing with those but we are not comfortable drawing conclusions about the program as a whole at this point." This is the same statement that was provided in the FY2009 and FY2008 annual reports, and it is nearly the same, with some wording changes, as what was reported in the FY2007 and FY2006 annual reports, although those annual reports referenced "a couple of students' having taken the comprehensive exams". Yet, at the same time, the annual reports indicate a growing graduate program. The FY2009 annual report discloses 12 graduate Ph.D. students, up from 10 graduate students in each of FY2008 and FY2007. Assuming, as the language indicates, that only one student has taken comprehensive exams in the past few years, perhaps some other assessment method might better serve the Criminal Justice department.

4. CLOSING THE LOOP

Were any actions taken on the basis of assessment results reported?	YES <u>X</u> ____	NO ____	QUALIFIED Y/N ____
• If so, do curricular or other improvements/ changes arising from assessment results directly address goals for student learning?	YES ____	NO <u>X</u> ____	QUALIFIED Y/N ____

Comments:

It is not apparent that the Criminal Justice department is engaging in closing-the-loop activities. This is, of course, understandable if the department's assessment methods are currently inactive, as discussed above.

The FY2010 document does report changes based on assessment. But these changes have been referenced repeatedly in past years. Thus, there is no apparent loop-closing at present. For example, in the FY2010 document, the department stated, "As noted above it is too early to decide on any specific program changes but we did develop a reading list and specific descriptions of the comprehensive exam format and rules to guide students in their study efforts. These guidelines were helpful but now we are developing specific study suggestions as well to better prepare students in the future." This same statement, apparently without any changes, was made in the FY2006, FY2007, FY2008, and FY2009 annual reports as well. Additionally, the FY2010 document states, "Based on analysis of student performance in one of the advanced statistics classes for the first cohort, a second more advanced quantitative analysis methods course was developed and offered." However, this same statement appears as well in the FY2007, FY2008, and FY2009 annual reports. It is not clear how these changes tie directly to assessment methods tied to the student learning goals as presented in the assessment plan.

SUMMARY

Strengths

- ☒ A specific plan for assessment is in place.
- ☒ Student learning goals are well-articulated.
- ☐ Assessment methods are clearly described.
- ☐ Assessment methods are appropriately selected.
- ☐ Assessment methods are well-implemented.
- ☐ Direct and indirect methods are implemented.
- ☐ Results are reported.
- ☐ Results are tied to closing the loop.
(Decision-making is tied to evidence.)

Areas for Improvement

- ☐ No specific plan for assessment is in place.
- ☐ Student learning goals are not well-articulated.
- ☐ Assessment methods are not clearly described.
- ☒ Assessment methods are not appropriately selected.
- ☒ Assessment methods are not well-implemented.
- ☒ A single type of assessment methods predominates.
- ☒ No results are reported.
- ☒ Results are not clearly tied to closing the loop.
(Decision-making is not directly tied to evidence.)

OVERALL SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee suggests that the Criminal Justice department consider adopting additional means of assessment that will be active in years during which no students are taking comprehensive exams. In particular, the Committee suggests that the department consider expanding their direct methods of assessment while adding indirect means of assessment, which, it appears, are not presently used by the Criminal Justice department in any capacity.

MATERIALS REVIEWED

- ☒ Annual report
- ☐ Appendices (cited in annual report)
- ☒ Other (please describe) Additional annual reports (FY2006 – FY2009)
- ☒ Assessment plan (as posted)
- ☒ Previous assessment review

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Section 1: Y Section 2: ? Section 3: N Section 4: ?

Coding Key:

- Y = yes, this is done appropriately and well
- N = no, this is not done at all, or it is not done in relationship to student learning
- NA = no information available
- ? = action or progress is apparent; however, evidence is lacking that this is completely and appropriately done

UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
Feedback to Academic Departments on Assessment Activities Reported in 2009-2010* Annual Reports
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

DEPARTMENT Criminal Justice **DATE** April 28, 2011

COMMITTEE MEMBER(S) CONDUCTING REVIEW Eric E. Johnson, Barbara Combs, Raina Urton

1. STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| • Were any goals referenced? | YES <u>X</u> | NO <u> </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u> </u> |
| • If so, were goals well articulated? | YES <u>X</u> | NO <u> </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u> </u> |
| • Do goals address student learning? | YES <u>X</u> | NO <u> </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u> </u> |

Comments:

The Criminal Justice department articulates 12 student learning goals distributed across five categories. Some of these goals may at first appear too abstract to serve as a foundation for meaningful assessment. For example, goals for Parts IV note that students will have an “appreciation for” or be “sensitive to” various objects, but there is no descriptive language specifying what these two terms mean in terms of measurable attributes. Still, the department’s assessment plan specifies particular objectives for the majority of the goals. These objectives are sufficiently specific about student learning outcomes such that they provide a solid footing for assessment.

In addition to the Departmental goals, please also consider UND’s Institutional and Essential Studies goals for student learning (shown in alignment within parentheses). Use ‘U’ (undergraduate) to identify UND/Essential Studies goals which are similar to the referenced departmental goals.

- | | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| <u>X</u> | 1 | Communication – written or oral (“able to write and speak in various settings with a sense of purpose/audience”) |
| <u>X</u> | 2 | Thinking and reasoning – critical thinking (or “be intellectually curious”; analyze, synthesize, evaluate) |
| <u> </u> | 3 | Thinking and reasoning – creative thinking (or “be intellectually creative”; explore, discover, engage) |
| <u> </u> | 4 | Thinking and reasoning – quantitative reasoning (“apply empirical data...analyze graphical information”) |
| <u>X</u> | 5 | Information literacy (“be able to access and evaluate...for effective, efficient, and ethical use”) |
| <u>X</u> | 6 | Diversity (“demonstrate understanding of diversity and use that understanding...”) |
| <u> </u> | 7 | Lifelong learning (“commit themselves to lifelong learning”) |
| <u>X</u> | 8 | Service/citizenship (“share responsibility both for their communities and for the world”) |

Comments regarding departmental goals and alignment of departmental goals with institutional and Essential Studies goals:

Part V’s Student Learning Goal 2 (“P5GOAL2”) – *To have an appreciation for efforts to establish a more just society.* – appears aligned with the Essential Studies program’s service/citizenship goal when one consults the objectives under the Criminal Justice’s department’s P5GOAL2, which are:

- Objective 2.1: To be sensitive to unequal distributions of opportunities, wealth, and Power in American society.*
- Objective 2.2: To be sensitive to the fact that inequitable distributions of valued resources create and aggravate social problems.*
- Objective 2.3: To feel capable of contributing to social change.*

* At the time of the Committee’s review, the Criminal Justice department had not yet posted its Annual Report for the FY2010 (2009-2010) year. The Committee was separately provided with a document labeled “Criminal Justice Assessment 2010” (referred to herein as the “FY2010 document”) for its review in the preparation of this feedback memorandum. This report has been prepared by referencing the FY2010 document.

2. ASSESSMENT METHODS

Were any specific assessment methods referenced? YES X NO ____ QUALIFIED Y/N ____

- If so, were specifically chosen assessment methods appropriately aligned with individual goals? YES X NO ____ QUALIFIED Y/N ____
- Were both direct and indirect assessment methods used as components of a “multiple measures” approach? YES ____ NO X QUALIFIED Y/N ____

Comments:

The Criminal Justice department uses pre-tests and post-tests as assessment measures, along with an analysis of oral presentations. There does not appear to be any use of indirect assessment.

3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Were any assessment results reported? YES X NO ____ QUALIFIED Y/N ____

- If so, were the results clear in terms of how they specifically affirm achievement of goals? YES X NO ____ QUALIFIED Y/N ____
- If so, were the results clear in terms of how they indicate need for improvement? YES X NO ____ QUALIFIED Y/N ____
- Were the results tied to goals for student learning? YES X NO ____ QUALIFIED Y/N ____

Comments:

The Criminal Justice department reported detailed results from its assessment testing, broken down by goals.

In addition to departmental goals, some assessment results may be applicable to institutional and Essential Studies goals. Use ‘U’ (undergraduate) to identify those results which are applicable to institutional/Essential Studies goal achievement. For indicated items, please describe findings in the appropriate section below. .

- X 1 Communication – written or oral (“able to write and speak in various settings with a sense of purpose/audience”)
- X 2 Thinking and reasoning – critical thinking (or “be intellectually curious”; analyze, synthesize, evaluate)
- ____ 3 Thinking and reasoning – creative thinking (or “be intellectually creative”; explore, discover, engage)
- ____ 4 Thinking and reasoning – quantitative reasoning (“apply empirical data...analyze graphical information”)
- X 5 Information literacy (“be able to access and evaluate...for effective, efficient, and ethical use”)
- X 6 Diversity (“demonstrate understanding of diversity and use that understanding...”)
- ____ 7 Lifelong learning (“commit themselves to lifelong learning”)
- X 8 Service/citizenship (“share responsibility both for their communities and for the world”)

Comments regarding results and the application of results to departmental, institutional and Essential Studies goals:

The goals assessed overlap with Essential Studies goals, but Essential Studies goals themselves are not referenced.

4. CLOSING THE LOOP

Were any actions taken on the basis of assessment results reported? YES ____ NO ____ QUALIFIED Y/N X

- If so, do curricular or other improvements/changes arising from assessment results directly address goals for student learning? YES ____ NO ____ QUALIFIED Y/N X

Comments:

The report of the Criminal Justice department references multiple curricular changes based on assessment. Some questions are raised, however, when one references this Committee's report from three years ago and the department's then-current annual report, from FY2007 (2006-2007). The changes occasioned by assessment seem to be largely the same. In fact, the Criminal Justice department's closing-the-loop narrative is much same in the FY2010 document as it was in the FY2006 report, along with all years in between. For instance, this Committee noted in its last feedback memorandum that the Criminal Justice department had decided to reallocate to itself the teaching of a key course. That note was a reference to the FY2007 report's statement that the Criminal Justice department would be assuming responsibility for the Corrections course, which, at that time, was taught by the Sociology department. The FY2010 document references the same change, as do all reports from FY2006 through the present. Additionally, the FY2007 and the FY2010 document contain identical statements regarding the prospective use of a waitlist and department screening to make sure students take the capstone course in the last semester. Moreover, the FY2006 through FY2010 documents contain similar statements about curricular changes "to strengthen [student] knowledge of criminal investigation issues and critical thinking" regarding the Criminal Investigations course.

In light of these comparisons, it is not clear that closing-the-loop activities currently thrive.

SUMMARY

Strengths

- ☒ A specific plan for assessment is in place.
- ☒ Student learning goals are well-articulated.
- ☒ Assessment methods are clearly described.
- ☐ Assessment methods are appropriately selected.
- ☐ Assessment methods are well-implemented.
- ☐ Direct and indirect methods are implemented.
- ☒ Results are reported.
- ☐ Results are tied to closing the loop.
(Decision-making is tied to evidence.)

Areas for Improvement

- ☐ No specific plan for assessment is in place.
- ☐ Student learning goals are not well-articulated.
- ☐ Assessment methods are not clearly described.
- ☐ Assessment methods are not appropriately selected.
- ☐ Assessment methods are not well-implemented.
- ☒ A single type of assessment methods predominates.
- ☐ No results are reported.
- ☐ Results are not clearly tied to closing the loop.
(Decision-making is not directly tied to evidence.)

OVERALL SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee commends the Criminal Justice department on clearly articulated goals and a thoughtfully constructed and faithfully followed plan of assessment testing. It may be useful for the department to consider descriptive definitions of the more abstract terms ("appreciation for" and "sensitive to") to aid in measuring how well students meet these goals and objectives. The Committee encourages the Criminal Justice department to make more use of the results by engaging in fresh thinking about what changes may be suggested by the data. If the data is no longer pointing to novel avenues for improvement, the department may wish to re-evaluate its assessment methods. The Committee once again, as it did in 2007, encourages the Criminal Justice department to diversify its methods by taking on additional assessment means in the form of indirect assessment.

MATERIALS REVIEWED

- ☒ Annual report
- ☐ Appendices (cited in annual report)
- ☒ Other (please describe) Additional annual reports (FY2006 – FY2009)
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