

UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
Feedback to Academic Departments on Assessment Activities Reported in 2013-14 (Academic year)

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

DEPARTMENT Economics **DATE** 4/13/15

PROGRAM(S) COVERED IN REVIEW BBA Business Economics, BA Economics

COMMITTEE MEMBER(S) CONDUCTING REVIEW Joan Hawthorne, Ken Ruit

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 goal language is quite clearly articulated in terms of describing what students are able to do – i.e., they “will be able to communicate clearly both orally and in writing,” “students will understand...and be able to use.”

We also note that your goals for the three undergraduate degrees appear to be identical. When multiple similar degree programs are offered, they typically should have some degree of difference in outcomes to justify the multiple degree options.

In addition to the program goals, please also consider UND’s institutional and Essential Studies goals for student learning (shown in alignment within parentheses) and identify which goals are similar to program goals.

- 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)
 X 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”)
 6 Diversity (“demonstrate understanding of diversity and use that understanding...”)
 7 Lifelong learning (“commit themselves to lifelong learning”)
 8 Service/citizenship (“share responsibility both for their communities and for the world”)

Comments regarding program goals and alignment with institutional and Essential Studies goals:

Program goals clearly specify communication, as well as describing a number of aspects of critical thinking (e.g., “solving problems, “assessing...policies,” “analyze economic issues.” Quantitative literacy appears to be addressed in goal 2: “using quantitative methods to solve...” and information literacy appears as part of what’s described in objective 2.1: “retrieve, interpret...economic data.”

2. ASSESSMENT METHODS

- | | | | |
|--|-----------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| 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>X</u> | NO <u> </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u> </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 assessment plan demonstrates a clear alignment of goals and objectives with methods. The list of work products to be assessed, in fact, is quite extensive – although it appears that a more limited array of work products was actually assessed (or probably is ever assessed in any individual year). Findings for assessments conducted in Econ 201 for the BBA core were generated and reported. The assessment report indicates that goal 2 will be the focus on next year’s assessment efforts. Goal

I was assessed through review and scoring of a sample of papers submitted in Economics 305. Goal 3 was assessed through work products collected in Econometrics, Econ 410.

Reviewing findings from these assessments, appears to demonstrate that the goals as numbered in the assessment report do not exactly align with those as numbered in the posted assessment plan, which probably indicates that a new plan exists and that should be submitted for posting on UND's assessment website.

3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

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

Comments:

Results were reported, in summary form, for goals 1 and 3. For example, the report specifies that papers in Economics 305 were scored (for goal 1) as above expectations, meeting expectations, or below expectations – and the summary conclusion states that students were able to describe events of the financial crisis at an appropriate level. Numbers of papers scored, percentage scoring at the various levels, and other details were not provided. On goal 3, the summary results statement indicates that students “received a ‘meets standards’” score on the Econ 410 assessment of their empirical skills. A need for improvement was identified via discussion, i.e., it’s essential that all students, no matter which courses taken previously, gain experience with the use of computers to solve quantitative problems (in this iteration of the assessment, faculty had difficulty distinguishing gaps in computer skills from gaps in quantitative problem solving skills). A problem with retention of quantitative skills was also identified for students continuing from the BA or BBA Business Economics degree into the MSAE grad program.

As a side note, the results cited in the report demonstrate that Economics majors (Business Economics vs. are treated separately, in cases where appropriate, for assessment purposes, and we were glad to see that distinction. However, it does appear that the BA and BBA Business Economics programs are seen as identical.

In addition to program goals, some assessment results may be applicable to institutional and Essential Studies goals. Indicate any goals for which the program presents findings, and, for indicated items, describe findings below.

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

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

Although some students failed to demonstrate appropriate levels of quantitative reasoning, discussion revealed that students had received very uneven levels of instruction in use of computer programs to solve quantitative problems in economics. This made it difficult to tell whether the difficulty was in quantitative skills or in computer skills, and the department intends to address that problem in future years.

4. CLOSING THE LOOP

| | | | |
|---|--------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Were any actions taken on the basis of assessment results reported? | YES <u>X</u> | NO <u> </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u> </u> |
| • If so, do curricular or other improvements/ | | | |

changes arising from assessment results
 directly address goals for student learning? YES ☒ X _____ NO _____ QUALIFIED Y/N _____

Comments:

A number of changes are in the works or have already occurred. Examples include the following:

- *the assessment plan was updated based on experience demonstrating that the previous plan was overly complicated'*
- *Economics 308 is being reconsidered in relation to the Banking & Financial Economics program;*
- *foundations classes are being re-examined (e.g., considering adding mandatory lab sessions, mandating inclusion of computer applications, etc.) based on findings from assessments completed for the BBA program;*
- *the primary assessment tool, in the future, will be a field examination – although supplemented by work products from courses;*
- *plans are in the works to incorporate indirect assessments, perhaps in a newly created department-specific capstone.*

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:

Given that there has been some tweaking of the assessment plan but the new plan is not yet posted, it's difficult to be definitive about the current learning goals and methods. However, the assessment report certainly suggests that the department is on the right track. This year's report indicates that the department is planning to implement additional assessment measures, in conjunction with the end-of-program Assurance and Learning instrument designed for use in the BBA program – and, it appears, indirect measures will be added as well.

The primary need at this point (aside from the need to get the current plan posted) is to ensure that distinctions in learning outcomes among the three undergraduate majors are clarified. However, this report demonstrates substantial progress in assessment activities, which we were very glad to see.

MATERIALS REVIEWED

- ☒ Annual assessment report
☐ Annual Report
☒ Assessment plan (as posted)
☒ Previous assessment review
☐ Other (please describe)

| | | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Reviewer(s): | Name | Joan Hawthorne | <input type="checkbox"/> | Kenneth Ruit | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Department | Academic Affairs | <input type="checkbox"/> | Basic Sciences | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Phone Number | 7-4684 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7-2570 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | e-mail | joan.hawthorne@und.edu | <input type="checkbox"/> | kenneth.ruit@med.und.edu | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Section 1: __Y__ Section 2: __Q__ Section 3: _Y____ Section 4: __Y__

Coding Key:

- Y = yes, this is done appropriately and well (bearing in mind the kind of program(s) reviewed and recognizing that assessment is a cyclical process, i.e., with additional kinds of data to be collected and analyzed in other years)
- Q = qualified yes as action or progress is apparent; however, evidence is lacking that this is completely and appropriately done
- N = no, it is unclear whether it was done at all, or it is not done in relationship to student learning

Revised Sept 24, 2014

UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
Feedback to Academic Departments on Assessment Activities Reported in 2013-14 (Academic year)

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

DEPARTMENT Economics **DATE** 4/13/15

PROGRAM(S) COVERED IN REVIEW BBA Banking & Financial Economics

COMMITTEE MEMBER(S) CONDUCTING REVIEW Joan Hawthorne, Ken Ruit

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 goal language is quite clearly articulated in terms of describing what students are able to do – i.e., they “will be able to communicate clearly both orally and in writing,” “students will understand...and be able to use.”

We also note that your goals for the three undergraduate degrees appear to be identical. When multiple similar degree programs are offered, they typically should have some degree of difference in outcomes to justify the multiple degree options.

In addition to the program goals, please also consider UND’s institutional and Essential Studies goals for student learning (shown in alignment within parentheses) and identify which goals are similar to program goals.

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 7 Lifelong learning (“commit themselves to lifelong learning”)
 8 Service/citizenship (“share responsibility both for their communities and for the world”)

Comments regarding program goals and alignment with institutional and Essential Studies goals:

Program goals clearly specify communication, as well as describing a number of aspects of critical thinking (e.g., “solving problems, “assessing...policies,” “analyze economic issues.” Quantitative literacy appears to be addressed in goal 2: “using quantitative methods to solve...” and information literacy appears as part of what’s described in objective 2.1: “retrieve, interpret...economic data.”

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> |
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Comments:

The assessment plan demonstrates a clear alignment of goals and objectives with methods. The list of work products to be assessed, in fact, is quite extensive – although it appears that a more limited array of work products was actually assessed (or probably is ever assessed in any individual year). Findings for assessments conducted in Econ 201 for the BBA core were generated and reported. The assessment report indicates that goal 2 will be the focus on next year’s assessment efforts. Goal 1

was assessed through review and scoring of a sample of papers submitted in Economics 305. Goal 3 was assessed through review and scoring of “exam questions” and papers written for a course – with course numbers not provided for these work products.

Reviewing findings from these assessments, appears to demonstrate that the goals as numbered in the assessment report do not exactly align with those as numbered in the posted assessment plan, which probably indicates that a new plan exists and that should be submitted for posting on UND’s assessment website.

3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

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

Comments:

Results were reported, in summary form, for goals 1 and 3. For example, the report specifies that papers in Economics 305 were scored (for goal 1) as above expectations, meeting expectations, or below expectations – and the summary conclusion states that students were able to describe events of the financial crisis at an appropriate level. Numbers of papers scored, percentage scoring at the various levels, and other details were not provided. On goal 3, the summary results statement suggests that student performance on the exam questions involving problem solving and quantitative methods were “below expectations” on average. Results from the student papers, scored for the same goals, were “much better” and “on average at the ‘meets expectations’ level.” No comments about need for improvement were included.

In addition to program goals, some assessment results may be applicable to institutional and Essential Studies goals. Indicate any goals for which the program presents findings, and, for indicated items, describe findings below.

| | |
|---------------|--|
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Comments regarding results and the application of results to program, institutional, and Essential Studies goals:

Results on quantitative reasoning were mixed, with those derived from exam questions disappointing, but results from the written paper demonstrating that most students were at the “meets expectations” level.

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 <u>X</u> | NO | QUALIFIED Y/N |

Comments:

A number of changes are in the works or have already occurred. Examples include the following:

- the assessment plan was updated based on experience demonstrating that the previous plan was overly complicated’

- *Economics 308 is being reconsidered in relation to the Banking & Financial Economics program;*
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SUMMARY

Strengths

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☐ 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.
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☐ A single type of assessment methods predominates.
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OVERALL SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Given that there has been some tweaking of the assessment plan but the new plan is not yet posted, it's difficult to be definitive about the current learning goals and methods. However, the assessment report certainly suggests that the department is on the right track. This year's report indicates that the department is planning to implement additional assessment measures, in conjunction with the end-of-program Assurance and Learning instrument designed for use in the BBA program – and, it appears, indirect measures will be added as well.

The primary need at this point (aside from the need to get the current plan posted) is to ensure that distinctions in learning outcomes among the three undergraduate majors are clarified. However, this report demonstrates substantial progress in assessment activities, which we were very glad to see.

MATERIALS REVIEWED

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☐ Annual Report
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☒ Previous assessment review
☐ Other (please describe)

| | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Reviewer(s): | Name | Joan Hawthorne | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kenneth Ruit |
| | Department | Academic Affairs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Basic Sciences |
| | Phone Number | 7-4684 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7-2570 |
| | e-mail | joan.hawthorne@und.edu | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> kenneth.ruit@med.und.edu |

Section 1: ☒ Y ☐ N Section 2: ☐ Q ☐ N Section 3: ☐ Y ☐ N Section 4: ☐ Y ☐ N

Coding Key:

- Y = yes, this is done appropriately and well (bearing in mind the kind of program(s) reviewed and recognizing that assessment is a cyclical process, i.e., with additional kinds of data to be collected and analyzed in other years)

- Q = qualified yes as action or progress is apparent; however, evidence is lacking that this is completely and appropriately done
- N = no, it is unclear whether it was done at all, or it is not done in relationship to student learning

Revised Sept 24, 2014

UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
Feedback to Academic Departments on Assessment Activities Reported in 2013-14__ (Academic year)

GRADUATE PROGRAMS

DEPARTMENT__Economics__ **DATE**__4/14/15__

PROGRAM(S) COVERED IN REVIEW __Master of Science in Applied Economics__

COMMITTEE MEMBER(S) CONDUCTING REVIEW__Joan Hawthorne, Ken Ruit__

1. STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------|------|------------------|
| • Were any goals referenced? | YES_X__ | NO__ | QUALIFIED Y/N __ |
| • If so, were goals well-articulated? | YES_X__ | NO__ | QUALIFIED Y/N __ |
| • Do goals address student learning? | YES_X__ | NO__ | QUALIFIED Y/N __ |

Comments:

Goals are clearly oriented toward student learning. We note that the previous assessment review had indicated a discrepancy between goals in the posted plan and those in the assessment report. No new plan has been posted, and no specific goals were discussed in this year's report – making it difficult to be certain whether the goals in the plan posted are indeed the current set of learning outcomes for the program. This suggests that it would be useful to revisit the plan and update, if appropriate, or reaffirm, if the current version is actually in use.

2. ASSESSMENT METHODS

- | | | | |
|--|-------|--------|---------------------|
| Were any specific assessment methods referenced? | YES__ | NO__ | QUALIFIED Y/N __X__ |
| • If so, were specifically chosen assessment methods appropriately aligned with individual goals? | YES__ | NO__ | QUALIFIED Y/N __X__ |
| • Were both direct and indirect assessment methods used as components of a “multiple measures” approach? | YES__ | NO_X__ | QUALIFIED Y/N __ |

Comments:

The assessment report mentions using student interviews and thesis reviews to carry out assessments. But the report also suggests that thesis information has not been systematically collected and comments about quality of analysis and writing are based on faculty perceptions rather than an examination of data. The other method discussed in this year's report was exit interviews, which appear to have been carried out the previous year but not in 2013-14.

On the other hand, the assessment plan identifies a full spectrum of assessment tools, most of which do not appear to be systematically implemented. It might be worth considering whether the number of work products for analysis could be pared down, with the potential result that what would then be a smaller list of methods could be more readily accomplished.

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__ | NO__ | QUALIFIED Y/N __X__ |
| • If so, were the results clear in terms of how they indicate need for improvement? | YES__ | NO__ | QUALIFIED Y/N __X__ |
| • Were the results tied to goals for student learning? | YES__ | NO__ | QUALIFIED Y/N __X__ |

Comments:

As indicated in the report, “most of the information for the issue of completion was anecdotal.” Faculty reported that they perceive a problem with thesis completion.

The interview results appeared to focus on outcomes assessed through the thesis, especially students’ ability to carry out economic research and effectively present results (orally and in writing). A number of problems surfaced through the interviews, such as students coming late to the first steps of the thesis process and with no topic in mind and limited understanding of strategies for collecting data. Although these appear to be important results, it’s unclear whether all students or a small sample were interviewed and whether the interviews were systematically analyzed. Furthermore, it would be very helpful to have the student perception data supported by some kind of more direct assessment – e.g., scores on completed theses that would verify whether the problems identified by the students are indeed the most problematic areas of the work products.

4. CLOSING THE LOOP

Were any actions taken on the basis of assessment results reported?

YES ☒ X ☐ NO ☐ QUALIFIED Y/N ☐

- 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:

In response to faculty and student perceptions that the thesis poses a problem for many students, the department now offers a thesis seminar class which is designed to teach students how to write a thesis in Economics. The class is also used to match students with advisors, addressing another complaint that students had reported via the interviews. Additional anecdotal evidence suggests that the results are positive in at least some respects (perhaps not in relation to writing skills). However, no verification has yet occurred.

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.
- ☒ X ☐ 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:

It appears that Economics faculty have primarily worked with anecdotal and perception data in recent years. While it’s important to recognize the value of such information, it is also important to verify perceptions via analysis of student work products which can allow faculty to actually see and discuss – in concrete terms – the outcomes they have determined to be crucial for their students. In the case of a grad program, work products from “culminating events” such as theses, defenses, and comprehensive exams are typical products for such scoring. We strongly recommend incorporating this kind of direct assessment into regular departmental practice, so that it occurs routinely as faculty participate in defenses or read final versions of theses.

On the other hand, it’s good to see that you have conducted the exit interviews and that they are clearly informing department conversations. It appears that this is a strategy that should be continued, perhaps with some kind of formalized process to ensure that interview results are systematically documented and analyzed – and thus have maximal credibility when used in departmental planning.

MATERIALS REVIEWED

☒ Annual assessment report
☐ Annual report
☒ Assessment plan (as posted)
☒ Previous assessment review
☐ Other (please describe)

| | | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Reviewer(s): | Name | Joan Hawthorne | <input type="checkbox"/> | Kenneth Ruit | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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Section 1: ☒ Y ☐ Q Section 2: ☐ Y ☐ Q Section 3: ☐ Y ☐ Q Section 4: ☐ Y ☐ Q

Coding Key:

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