

**UNDERGRADUATE**

**ASSURANCE OF LEARNING**

Prepared by the McCoy College Assurance of Learning Committee:

Course Coordinator Core Course

Ms. Jennifer Krou CIS 1323 Introduction to Microcomputer Applications

Dr. Dean Showalter ECO 2314 Principles of Microeconomics

Dr. Xiao Meng ECO 2315 Principles of Macroeconomics

Mr. Rob Konopaske BA 2310 Introduction to Business in a Global Environment

Dr. Francis Mendez QMST 2333 Business Statistics

Dr. Jeff Todd BLAW 2361 Legal Environment of Business

Ms. Elizabeth Ponder ACC 2361 Introduction to Financial Accounting

Ms. Alex Hampshire ACC 2362 Introduction to Managerial Accounting

Dr. Rob Konopaske MGT 3303 Management of Organizations

Dr. Vance Lesseig FIN 3312 Business Finance

Mr. Ken Murdock MKT 3343 Principles of Marketing

Ms. Dave Angelow CIS 3380 Enterprise Inf. Tech. and Bus. Intelligence

Dr. Stephanie Solansky MGT 3453 Bus. Comm. and Professional Development

Dr. Phillip Davis MGT 4335 Strategic Management and Business Policy

Dr. Taewon Suh, Assurance of Learning Committee, Chair Ex-officio

Dr. David Wierschem, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs Ex-officio

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# ASSURANCE OF LEARNING

**In the**

**McCoy COLLEGE OF BUSINESS**

## Introduction.

The McCoy College of Business is committed to the assurance of learning process to improve student learning and retention. McCoy College faculty perform assessments in targeted undergraduate classes to improve academic student success and to ensure currency and relevance to business disciplines and organizations that recruit and hire McCoy College graduates. The assurance of learning process is a faculty-led process that measures student achievement of learning of major and program-level goals to provide in-process feedback for continuous improvement. Assurance of learning is performed not only to satisfy demands for accountability by external agencies, but to fulfill faculty responsibilities for student learning.

This guide is separated into five sections.

* Section I – The introduction
* Section II – ***McCoy College of Business* -** includes the mission, vision, values, and strategic goals of the McCoy College.
* Section III – ***Assurance of Learning -*** includes information specific to undergraduate major and program assurance of learning.
* Section IV – ***Assurance of Learning Processes -*** details the assessment process for direct (course-embedded) assessment of student learning and discusses indirect assessment processes and measures used to corroborate the results of direct assessments for both AACSB and SACS accreditation requirements.
* Section V – ***Accreditation Requirements and FAQ -*** elaborates on AACSB-International and SACS requirements and includes frequently asked questions concerning assurance of learning processes and procedures written specifically for McCoy College faculty

The McCoy College has Assurance of Learning web pages available from the McCoy College web site at <https://www.mccoy.txstate.edu/assessment/>. Faculty and other interested constituents can find publicly available information and specific direct and indirect assessment results.

## McCoy College of Business.

The McCoy College of Business regularly reviews and updates the strategic plan. The strategic plan includes definition of the mission, vision and values that guide the college and faculty to ensure alignment across all aspects of the organization.

**Mission.**

The McCoy College of Business fosters an engaged learning community that prepares a diverse student population for successful business careers as responsible global citizens. The College complements these efforts with research that adds to knowledge, provides solutions to business challenges, and contributes to pedagogical advances.

**Vision.**

The McCoy College of Business strives to be a leader in experiential business education and business relevant, socially significant research.

**Values.**

Committed to supporting the mission of Texas State University as a Hispanic Serving Institution and designated emerging research institution for the state of Texas, we embrace:

* A unique combination of experiential learning, excellent faculty instruction, and a student-centered culture.
* Responsiveness, accountability, and on-going contributions through research and service to Texas and beyond.
* Excellence in all endeavors through self-study, innovation, and continuous improvement.
* Integrity and adherence to professional and ethical standards.
* Respect for individuals and a diverse culture that promotes a globally engaged community of students, staff, and faculty.
* Student engagement and development through active involvement in student organizations.
* Life-long learning and professional development of students, staff, and faculty.

**Strategic Goals.**

The following goals give direction to the McCoy College of Business mission and recognize that scholarship and service support the primary focus of teaching and learning.

* Maintain AACSB standards
* Develop a strong research culture while maintaining quality teaching
* Increase graduate student enrollment by providing innovative, market-driven programs
* Focus on global business initiatives
* Provide an environment for our learning community that enhances and supports diversity
* Foster business community relationships with primary emphasis on small and medium-size businesses
* Sustain a development program
* Support a dynamic student learning environment

## Assurance of Learning

The McCoy College considers the development and management of curricula to be of critical importance. Assurance of Learning is an integral part of curricula management and revision. The continuous improvement efforts defined by the assessment process results in a curriculum that reflects the changing nature of both our students and the business environment in general.

The McCoy College offers the undergraduate BBA degree with majors in Accounting, Computer Information Systems, Economics, Finance, Management, and Marketing. All college level programs are accredited by AACSB-International, and the Department of Accounting maintains separate AACSB Accounting accreditation. Additionally, Texas State University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states.

### SACS Assurance of Learning

### Texas State University is committed to the continuous improvement of units, programs, and actions through the identification and assessment of outcomes as well as through thoughtful reflection on the attainment of desired outcomes.

### Educational program outcomes focus on student learning yet also include administrative outcomes. Student learning outcomes identify the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students are expected to acquire through their course of study in a particular program. They answer the following question: What should graduates of a particular major/program be expected to know, do, and value upon completion of the program?

### The SACS accreditation standard associated with assurance of learning is:

### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

### 8.2 The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in the areas below:

### a. Student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs

### b. Student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs

### For the McCoy College of Business SACS assurance of learning is applied to the undergraduate major and certificate programs offered in Accounting, Computer Information Systems, Economics, Finance, Management, and Marketing.

### AACSB Assurance of Learning

The AACSB Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation (July 28, 2020) Standard 5 specifically states:

*The school uses well-documented assurance of learning (AoL) processes that include direct and indirect measures for ensuring the quality of all degree programs that are deemed in scope for accreditation purposes. The results of the school’s AoL work lead to curricular and process improvements.*

Further, the standard defines Assurance of Learning as:

*Assurance of learning (AoL) refers to the systematic processes and assessment plans that collectively demonstrate that learners achieve learning competencies for the programs in which they participate that are within the scope of the school’s accreditation. AoL also includes the processes of identifying competency gaps and designing and implementing changes to the curriculum and learning experience so the learning competencies are met. AACSB accreditation is concerned with broad, program-level, focused competency goals for each degree program, rather than detailed competency goals by course or topic.*

For the McCoy College of Business, AACSB assurance of learning is applied to the undergraduate BBA program.

## Assurance of Learning Process.

Assurance of learning outcomes in the McCoy College, regardless of the major/program, is considered a ***general faculty responsibility*** to ensure that students learn critical skills and acquire knowledge deemed important and appropriate by college faculty members.

### SACS

The assessment process for SACS is a process that requires the faculty major/program director to complete a formal report annually. The major/program faculty are responsible for identifying five measurable student learning outcomes and two additional administrative outcomes that are consistent with the mission and overall goals of the major/program. For certificate programs, identify a minimum of three measurable student learning outcomes that are consistent with the mission and overall goals of the program.

Once the outcomes have been identified, the faculty identify two assessment methods of measurement and the courses in which the methods will be applied that will be used to determine progress on the outcome; direct methods are preferred.  Two different methods of measurement are selected for each outcome as multiple methods of measurement are necessary to assure reliability and validity. Typically, core courses of the major/program are selected for conducting the assessment methods. Depending on the course level and student expectations faculty determine acceptable levels of standard performance for each outcome and method.

Once the outcomes and assessment methods have been identified, core course faculty collect, analyze, and report the assessment data each year. Once the data has been analyzed, the core course coordinator for each course conducting assessment will describe the evidence of improvement gained from any action plans previously implemented. For those outcomes where improvement has not been identified, or where additional improvement is warranted, faculty will develop an action plan of curriculum changes to achieve improvement in student learning. The observations and action plans are then forwarded to the major/program director for review and final submission to the SACS Outcomes Assessment repository.

### AACSB

As an AACSB-International accredited business college, the McCoy College utilizes Assurance of Learning to determine the success of its students achieving the program or BBA learning goals. Unlike the SACS process, the AACSB assessment process works in conjunction with the curriculum review process to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated effort to support continuous improvement of student learning goal achievement and academic success.

Undergraduate assurance of learning in the McCoy College is a two-tiered approach including course level review and program level review at the BBA degree level. Therefore, assessment is applied to college level derived learning goals and takes place in college core courses which are required of all BBA majors.

As a part of the assessment process the McCoy College Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC) has the responsibility, as the elected representative body of the college faculty, to determine the specific learning outcomes/goals for the BBA program. McCoy College program-level learning goals indicate to constituents what the faculty want students “to be” or “to have” as well as “be able to do” on completion of their business degree program.

Given the large number of students enrolled in the college and multiple sections for each undergraduate core course, the undergraduate BBA program uses core course coordinators who are responsible for coordination of multi-section core courses. Core course faculty comprise the AoL committee and are responsible for the development of assessment instruments, gathering assessment data, and reporting results. Student performance related to each specific learning goal is assessed in multiple undergraduate courses through both direct and indirect methods. (See CBAPPS 2.04 – Planning, Developing, Monitoring and Assessing Undergraduate Curricula - for a list of core course coordinator responsibilities.)

While each learning goal is assessed each semester, and results collected, formal reporting of assessment results consists of reporting on two learning goals a year in a three-year rotation. The three-year rotation provides a reporting time frame that allows for a more in-depth review of the impact of curriculum changes. For the formal report, core course coordinators provide a three-year window of observed student assessment results along with a narrative discussing the impact of the previous course and programmatic curricular changes. The course coordinator will then ‘Close the Loop’ by recommending new course level curriculum changes. The formal report for each learning goal being reviewed is then presented to the AoL and UCC committees for review.

At the beginning of the following Fall semester, a joint meeting of the AoL and UCC is held to review the reported assessment results, proposed curricular changes, and indirect measures. Discussions are held reviewing the core course proposed curriculum changes and potential programmatic level changes in light of the reported results and indirect measures. This two-tiered review at the course level and the program level, allows for a comprehensive assessment of student knowledge and skills at the BBA program level and satisfies the requirements of AACSB and other constituents.

Once final curricular changes, course and program level, are finalized the results are implemented and the final report is submitted to various stakeholders of the college and posted to the AoL website.

### Direct (Course Embedded) Assessment.

Direct assessment methods require students to demonstrate knowledge and skills and provide data that directly measure the achievement of expected outcomes. Direct measures refer to evidence from learner work such as examinations, quizzes, assignments, and internship or externship feedback that is based on direct observation of specific performance behaviors or outcomes. The McCoy College measures each learning goal in multiple classes using multi-method approaches to validate results. For example, in the BBA program, student learning of the goal “analytical thinking” is measured in two core courses, one at the lower level and one at the upper level, using exams, projects and application assignments. This goal is reinforced in courses throughout the college through common programs and software packages that are introduced at the freshman level and progress until fully applied at the senior level, in accordance with Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning, and necessary for the successful completion of other courses in the curriculum.

### Indirect Assessment of Program Learning Goals.

Indirect assessment of college learning goals is used to corroborate the results of direct (course embedded) assessments. Indirect measures of learning refer to evidence attained from third-party input. Indirect assessments may include surveys of students or alumni, consultation with multiple advisory boards within the college, consultation with employers and the Texas State Career Services Office, departmental internship directors, Business Leadership Week participants, and other constituents to provide perceptual information on how students “feel” about what they have learned. The McCoy College uses multiple indirect assessment techniques to corroborate direct classroom assessment.

## Accreditation Requirements and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).

The following questions and answers concerning assessment were derived from multiple sources and rely on information from AACSB-International as well as other assessment resources. Responses to various questions have been modified to suit the circumstances of McCoy College faculty. Specific questions not addressed in this section should be directed to the Chair of the McCoy College Assurance of Learning Committee or the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs.

### What is “Program-Level” Assurance of Learning as specified by AACSB?

The college or school must specify program-level learning goals for each separate degree program. Generally, such goals are anticipated for each degree, not for separate majors or concentrations within a degree. For example, the McCoy College offers a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degree with defined majors in accounting, CIS, economics, finance, management, and marketing. A set of program-level learning goals for the BBA degree must be provided and assessed.

### What is “Program-Level” Assurance of Learning as specified by SACS?

Given the broader role of SACS in accrediting all facets of the University, the primary difference between AACSB-International and SACS occurs at the undergraduate level. SACS requires that each individual undergraduate major be evaluated and assessed where AACSB is concerned with the BBA program for all undergraduate majors. Essentially, AACSB allows the college to assess student learning goals in courses common to all BBA majors in the college, where SACS requires student learning goals specific to a particular major. Thus, for SACS review, each department has a set of student learning goals which is a combination of departmental learning goals specific to the major field and college learning goals for all undergraduate students.

### What ratio of “direct” versus “indirect” assessments should be performed?

AACSB-International requires that assurance of learning include both “direct and indirect measures” of student learning. To meet AACSB expectations regarding assurance of student learning, the majority of a college or school’s assessment plan should rely on direct measures of student learning, and the McCoy College used a multi-course assessment approach for each learning goal. Indirect methods are an appropriate method to gather data on specific program-level learning goals; however, data from indirect methods are used to corroborate data gathered through direct methods. This corroboration will yield constituent perceptions of how a curriculum is functioning and complement direct assessments of student learning.

### Must all students be assessed?

For the purpose of meeting AACSB-International standards, sampling may be utilized, as long as it is representative. Faculty teaching college core courses for undergraduate and graduate programs, as scholars in their respective fields and under the leadership of the Core Course Coordinator or program director, have the responsibility for determining appropriate representative sample sizes. Courses taught online are also assessed to evaluate consistency of curriculum delivery. Course coordinators or program directors often require census data from graduate courses for assessment purposes.

### Should college core course faculty and coordinators gather data and submit results to the assurance of learning committee every year?

AACSB standards allow for program-level learning goals to be reviewed on a scheduled rotational basis. At least two program-level goals are reviewed each year, and college core courses covering that particular program goal are required to submit the results of course-embedded assessment to the assurance of learning committee or program director during the scheduled review year. However, since the McCoy College views assessment as a continuous process, core course coordinators and core course faculty gather data every year for the longitudinal reporting of assessment results.

### Who sets performance standards for learning goals and how many students must meet or exceed the performance standard on a given learning goal?

The Assurance of Learning Standards by AACSB states that data on student learning on program-level learning goals is to be used for the purposes of improving business curricula to enhance student learning. For each program-level learning goal assessed in a college core course, the faculty will determine their minimum expectation or standard, and the overall evaluative standard will be ***continuous improvement*** of student learning on the specified goal.

### How should student performance on learning goals be reported?

For reporting data on any learning goal, core course coordinators or faculty members should aggregate data and report the results by three levels: Exceeds Expectations; Meets Expectations; or Does Not Meet Expectations.

In order to preserve the integrity of the assessment process in multi-section courses, core course coordinators should release aggregate data by core course (all sections) to the assurance of learning committee and not individual results by each professor teaching the course. Program Assessment in the McCoy College is not for the purpose of evaluation of individual faculty performance in the classroom; it concerns the aggregate level of student learning.

### Why is it important to use multiple measures in the assessment of program learning goals?

The very nature of assessment makes it important that decisions concerning student learning are not based on performance in any single course or a single assessment methodology. Relying on the results from one core course to assess a program-level goal could result in misleading perceptions of student performance across the program.

Students may perform better on assignments relating to a particular goal in one core course and poorer in another core course. Thus, the focus should be on program assessment of student learning across multiple core courses and methodologies, and information on student performance in any single core course should allow for core course faculty and departments to examine pedagogy and standards for that course.

Additionally, when direct assessments in core courses are corroborated by indirect assessment measures, the results should provide a clearer picture of student learning.

### What documentation must be retained by faculty and/or core course coordinators for review by outside constituents?

Faculty or core course coordinators should retain copies of instruments used for direct assessment, such as assignments, written products, test questions, rubrics, scoring grids, etc. They must also retain sample student products relating to the instruments used. These documents should be retained through the next AACSB re-accreditation review.

Aggregate results of direct assessments for various learning goals gathered and/or submitted should be retained by the faculty member or course coordinator by semester or year for longitudinal review. Minutes of meetings to discuss curricula and assessment of student learning should be retained.

The McCoy College Assurance of Learning Committee, Department Chairs, and Program Directors all have the responsibility to maintain assessment results. These groups also have the responsibility to make faculty and other constituencies aware of assessment results and to publish results and recommendations where appropriate.

### Why can’t course grades be used to indicate student learning?

Course grades measure the students’ mastery of a course topic taught by a specific professor. The course grade is an aggregate measure comprised of students’ performance on multiple exams, assignments, projects, homework, extra credit, etc. Even if professors teach from a common syllabus, a course grade is too aggregate a measure to provide an assessment of specific skills or knowledge (program-level learning goals). For example, a course may include an oral presentation assignment that is worth 20% of the course grade. It is possible for one student to get an exceptional grade on that assignment, and another student to fail that assignment, with both students receiving a “C” for the final course grade. The course grade provides no measure of student’s demonstrated oral presentation skills or the capacity of the curriculum to produce the desired oral communication traits in its students.

On the other hand, the grades on the oral assignment are an indicator of students’ oral skills. If the core course teaching faculty agree on how the assignment is to be evaluated (including articulating minimum performance standards (meets expectations)), an oral presentation assigned within a course may be an appropriate program assessment measure. Thus, course products (cases, papers, presentations, exercises, directed test questions, etc.) may be used to meet assurance of learning standards, but course grades, by themselves, cannot.

### What makes assessment of student learning different than grading?

The list below is not a set of opposites, and it is not exhaustive. It is suggestive. Assessment and grades differ, but they can overlap. Annotations for some terms appear below the table.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assessment** | **Grades** |
| Formative | Summative |
| Diagnostic | Final |
| Non-Judgmental | Evaluative |
| Private | Administrative |
| Anonymous | Identified |
| Partial | Integrative |
| Specific | Holistic |
| Mainly Subtext | Mostly Text |
| Suggestive | Rigorous |
| Usually Goal-Directed | Usually Content-Driven |

*Formative* refers to the formation of a concept or item where *summative* refers to an “adding-up” or summary stage. Assessments usually occur in mid-progress. Grades are usually recorded at the end of a project or class in order to summarize academic quality.

Assessment is *non-judgmental* in a sense that it focuses on learning, which is the outcome of many influences, including teaching style, student motivation, time on task, study intensity, and background knowledge. Therefore, no one element can be singled out for praise or blame for student learning of a given program-level learning goal. In contrast, grades carry *evaluative* weight as to the worthiness of student achievement and are applied, for good or ill, directly to them.

Assessments tend to be used in *private* and become public only under the assessor’s control. Grades, while not truly public, are part of the *administrative* record available throughout an educational institution. Assessments are almost always collected in *anonymous* fashion, and the results are released in the aggregate. Grades are *identified* with specific students.

Assessment looks at *specific* parts of the learning environment. Grades are *holistic* in the sense that they record academic achievement for a whole course. Grades tend to reflect student mastery of disciplinary course *content;* whereas, assessment usually aims at the (program) *goals* for all baccalaureate and/or graduate students in a given program, such as written communication, oral communication, critical thinking and analytical skills.

Final grades reduce academic achievement for an entire semester to a single mark.

The *text* of a course is its disciplinary content; grades tend to focus on that. The *subtext* of a course involves transferable baccalaureate skills, such as critical thinking, written communication, and analytical skills. For example, the “text” of course in introductory management course may revolve around knowledge of management functions and processes. The “subtext” of such a course might include critical and analytical thinking skills, problem-solving and written and oral communication skills. Grades tend to focus on text; assessment tends to emphasize subtext.

Assessment findings tend to be *suggestive* and have pedagogical significance. That is, assessment findings shift pedagogy that need not be justified statistically but can be justified when students learn better. In contrast, grades are recorded in a *rigorous* manner that does have statistical significance.