

PROCESS:

The University of Baltimore (UBalt) conducts assessment of student learning at the institutional, program, unit, and course levels. Indirect and direct measures are used to assess student preparation, learning, and learning gaps across the student journey at the University in order to plan improvements to the student experience. External, institution-wide surveys provide benchmarking data to identify institutional strengths and areas of opportunity. Student learning outcomes (SLOs) are required for all courses and academic programs at the University and are approved through shared governance curriculum processes. Faculty propose course student learning outcomes through a course definition document (CDD) that includes a course content outline and typical course-based assessment measures. Program SLOs also appear in proposals. Programs are required to assess each program SLO at least once within three years and may do so more often depending upon specialized accreditation needs and faculty preferences. Program reviews are to provide evidence of improvement based on assessment of student learning and provide the main occasion for identifying if program SLOs need revision. Deans are responsible for ensuring assessment of student learning and that results are used to improve teaching and learning.

Undergraduate General Education (GE) and Graduation Requirements (GR) have SLOs approved through shared governance. GEs are aligned with COMAR (arts & humanities, writing, mathematics, social & behavioral sciences, physical & biological sciences), and GRs align with Middle States requirements, AAC&U recommendations, and the UBalt mission and are designed to reflect skills to be used in the major and related careers (technological fluency, information literacy, global & diverse perspectives, oral communication, capstone experience). A subcommittee of the University Faculty Senate, the General Education Council (GEC), oversees GE and GE assessment. Courses that meet GR requirements are assessed by the program unless the program prefers the Council to do so, but programs assess capstones. GEC is also staffed by the associate provost, the associate registrar overseeing transfer, and a staff member from the Bank of America Center for Excellence in Learning, Teaching, and Technology (CELTT). Program outcomes combined with GE and GR requirements, plus work done with the Career and Internship Center tied to courses, address all Undergraduate Learning Goals. As the five-year general education assessment cycle ends and a new assessment plan is developed, the university-wide learning goals will also be reviewed. Based on its assessment of the assessment process, GEC is also recommending edits to some GE and GR SLOs, while supporting the current GE-GR structure.

Assessment Area	Person(s) Responsible	Measurement Tools	Timeline
New student placement (Writing and Math—note that exemptions from placement have been piloted & approved)	Academic Coordinator, Student Support and Success Services, working with Mathematics and Writing Program directors	ALEKS (mathematics; identifies specific skill gaps) ACT/SAT for 1 st -yr (piloting optional testing; not required now) Writing placement essays (with rubric)	Summer prior to first fall enrollment Term before enrollment for transfers (all online; numerous dates)
International student readiness	Enrollment Management Law Admissions and the Director of Diversity & International Services	TOEFL or IELTS or (temporarily in pandemic) Duolingo *LLM Laws of the US – performance in partnership with Towson U English Language Institute	Must have sufficient score to be admitted; piloting Duolingo in pandemic *Language institute in the year prior to LLM start
Course SLOs	Faculty	Students assessed via examinations, projects, essays, presentations, lab reports, etc.	SLOs themselves are assessed in program review

Program review with program SLOs	Program director leading faculty	Rubrics tied to the measurement tools; benchmarks for performance External reviews	All SLOs assessed at least once every 3 years and programs every 5 or 6 years
General Education	General Education Council	Rubrics developed by faculty; several based on AAC&U value rubrics	Entire cycle for GE and GR has been 5 years; to be proposed in Fall 21 to move to 4 years
Graduation Requirements	Programs or General Education Council if there is one program does not assess	Rubrics developed by faculty; several based on AAC&U value rubrics	Entire cycle for GE and GR has been 5 years; to be proposed in Fall 21 to move to 4 years
Strategic Plan – goal 2 student success	AVP Student Success & Support Services and Director of Academic and Faculty Support	Disaggregated retention and completion rates Analysis of transfer credit Multi-section course analysis Individual course analysis (student performance; barriers; modality)	Grad & retention rates – ea. semester Annual high D-C/F/W rate review Biennial GE performance annual Math pass rates
Career placement	Director, Center for Career and Internship Services Asst. Dean, Law Career Center Institutional Advancement	Destination survey Employer surveys Alumni surveys	Annual Periodic Annual (& some programs distribute for program review)
Student Engagement	AVP Student Success and Support Services Associate Dean, Law	NSSE local surveys LSSSE	Every other year (freshmen & seniors) At least twice/ABA cycle

This chart does not capture regularly distributed surveys aimed at assessing institutional performance against peers (NSSE, FSSE, USNWR et al.) or non-routine assessment activities, e.g., the 2019 Freshmen Task Force, the 2020-21 Board of Regents Task Force Implementation teams, and surveying of student needs during the pandemic (HEDS surveys). Institutional Research and CELTT partner with faculty and schools to develop strategies for assessing learning directed at improvement efforts impacting more than one course or program (e.g., the CELTT initiative with a Faculty Fellow on quantitative reasoning; review of courses with high (UG) D/F/W or (GR) C/F/W rates). Undergraduates also receive midterm grades, and an early alert system for undergraduates helps connect faculty to advisors to reach out to students.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Faculty beyond those who developed the course student learning outcomes (SLOs) learn about them and their applicable assessment measures through the course definition document (CDD), which also includes an outline of topics that facilitates the alignment of syllabi across sections and semesters. Multi-section courses share a basic syllabus and at least one major signature assignment. Course learning outcomes and any relevant GE and GR learning outcomes must appear on syllabi, and a syllabus repository maintained by deans’ staff facilitates review of compliance.

Approved program SLOs are posted on program web pages, and programs are required to have a curriculum map showing where program SLOs that implement the program mission are taught and assessed in a program. The ABA-accredited and AALS member School of Law has an assessment committee of faculty who drive program improvement based on findings. In the AACSB-accredited Merrick School of Business, data collection occurs every other fall with faculty presenting findings the ensuing spring at UG and GR retreats to identify improvements. Chairs work with the associate dean to ensure results are archived. In the College of Public Affairs (CPA), the three executive directors of the schools work with the program directors, faculty, and the associate dean to ensure assessment occurs and is leveraged for improvement. Each of the three CPA schools has a specialized accreditation driving learning outcomes and

faculty use of assessment measures (NASPAA, AUPHA, ACJS). In the Yale Gordon College of Arts and Sciences, program directors are responsible for leading faculty in assessment, while the dean is responsible for ensuring it is completed. Counseling is in the process of gaining specialized accreditation. For all units, the associate provost manages State program review, and the Assessment and Administrative Coordinator tracks the assessment archived and works to keep deans' teams apprised of documentation gaps. CELTT also meets with individual faculty on courses (use of high-impact practices, instructional design and assessment, improving the articulation of SLOs etc.).

META-ASSESSMENT: using assessment to improve teaching and learning & evaluating measurement tools

1. UBalt data showed the majority of students who placed into developmental mathematics did not successfully complete college-level mathematics in a year, even after it moved to a modular curriculum in which students only needed to repeat areas where they performed below standards. UBalt partnered with CCBC to pilot its accelerated math program (AMP), recognized nationally for its success with using a co-requisite model for the developmental course and the for-credit course. The UBalt faculty member directing the Mathematics then studied pass rates of the UBalt module-based developmental mathematics and credit-bearing intro math as compared to the UBalt implementation of the AMP program. Data were compelling: the AMP model in 2019-2020 was over 2.5 times more successful than the predecessor, improving students' successful completion by 34.3%. The AMP will continue.
2. The School of Law necessarily uses first-time bar passage rates as a key indicator of student success and has also used LSSSE feedback. Two courses were developed for students who demonstrated need: Introduction to Advocacy (1L) and Rules and Reasoning, which is a section attached to a doctrinal course. After a pilot, bar passage data were analyzed, and the changes retained. This spring, course evaluations and grade analysis data has led to changing grading for the 3L Essential Skills for the Bar course. The course was P/F and is now being moved to letter grading with an upper-level curve to better prepare students at the outset for the high expectations of the course but not putting maximal pressure on GPAs.
3. The Merrick School of Business MBA offers early in the curriculum a course on entrepreneurship in which students are to create and evaluate an original product or service; working prototypes and evidence of innovation and/or scalability are needed to receive an exemplary rating in the pitch portion of the assessment. In the first year of the course, when a 3-minute pitch was required, 0% exceeded expectations and 68% did not meet expectations. The assignment was daunting at that early stage. The course was redesigned as part of overall curriculum redesign; a course on product development was added and a higher-level course on leading innovation. The introductory pitch was modified to a minute, which is more aligned with practices of startup companies. After two years, over 55% exceeded expectations (50% for the online MBA) and 17% did not meet expectations (19% for the online MBA).
4. In the College of Public Affairs, the Master of Public Administration program was reviewed for NASPAA accreditation. Writing skills in a core public policy course were found to be an issue for many students. Writing Fellows were then embedded in two core courses that students take early in the program (PUAD 622, 623). Further assessment shows writing skills improving. Students also demonstrated weakness in citation skills, which was addressed not only by the Writing Fellows in 622 and 623 but also by the addition of relevant exercises in 621. Two other courses were redesigned through a CELTT initiative aimed at decreasing C, F, and withdrawal rates in graduate courses. Faculty identified barriers to success and designed different scaffolding of learning to diminish the barriers.

Appendices:

1. Summary of relevant items from the last Middle States self-study and visit

At the time of the University's last Middle States visit in 2017, the visiting team commended the University "for its efforts to create, design, implement, and improve its general education program since its decision to reestablish four-year undergraduate programs in 2007." There were no Middle States requirements upon the University related to assessment development, but the University's own self-study recommended two actions, which the visiting team supported in its recommendations. These were (1) to identify ways to disseminate more broadly and in more timely ways and in more useable formats institutional data that can be used to improve student learning and the student experience; and (2) to make the reporting of information on learning outcomes assessment simpler and more broadly understood to improve courses, programs, and institutional programming. Both recommendations have been acted upon, with some improvements and some work still to do in order to build a strong culture of institutional assessment and improvement. Some of the steps taken to make assessment results easier to identify and use are described in the report.

In 2018, the University developed a PowerBi dashboard for undergraduate education to help programs synthesize data from the student information system to look at student performance and enrollment through a variety of variable-specific lenses. A graduate dashboard is planned as soon as technology resources can be devoted to it. Program directors and deans' staff can use the dashboard to focus on one or more student characteristic at a time to identify areas of program strength and opportunity.

A faculty hub has been developed by CELTT which faculty access through the learning management system. There faculty can access information on how to use authentic assessment of learning in courses, whether in person or online, and provides guidance on using tools like VoiceThread for improved instruction.

One way the University is endeavoring to make assessment results more accessible—and to demystify assessment of learning at the program level—is to move assessment to a simpler archiving system. The University has been using Watermark's TaskStream assessment software for both academic and academic support units. In approaching the end of the last contract, which was due to end in April 2021, input was sought from the Chairs Council, the University Faculty Senate, deans' staff, CELTT, and other stakeholders about whether to remain with the product or to move assessment materials into a SharePoint site or sites. Already, in 2019, the Merrick School of Business had been required to post its assessment materials in SharePoint for the purpose of the AACSB team visit. UBalt decided to make SharePoint its assessment archive as part of the effort to make assessment simpler and more transparent. TaskStream has a relatively inflexible structure, requires frequent use and training to use with any facility, and is not well structured to put the focus on documenting "closing the loop"—showing where results have led to improvements. On the other hand, SharePoint can have a relatively simple file hierarchy structure that any faculty member can understand. TaskStream is a more effective product in a top-down environment than in an institution where assessment practices may need to follow different timelines. Assessment templates are posted online on an assessment web page and within the SharePoint site for easy access.

Any of our specialized program accreditation or program review reports are available upon request. They are viewable to the UBalt community on ShaerPoint sites behind a login.