

Assessment Report of the Koppelman School of Business, December 2015

INTRODUCTION

The business program at Brooklyn College was established in 1985 and was housed for many years in the Economics Department, which reported directly to the Provost. In the period from 2011 through 2015, a number of major structural changes occurred. These included reorganization into four departments (i.e., Accounting, Economics, Finance, and Business Management) housed in a School of Business, and, in 2015, the naming of the School as the Koppelman School of Business (KSB). These changes positioned the KSB to pursue initial AACSB accreditation. As part of the accreditation effort, KSB has devoted significant resources since 2011 to developing a culture of continuous improvement, assurance of student learning, and assessment.

The first step in the KSB accreditation effort was the development of a school mission statement that could focus our efforts on student learning for career preparation:

“We prepare our diverse learning community for professional careers and active citizenship by providing a high quality education that inculcates the skills and global mindsets demanded by business, ethical business practices and a healthy respect for the intellectual traditions of Brooklyn College. Student learning is enhanced by the broad research activities that faculty integrates into their teaching and the sense of community created through student-faculty interaction”.

In support of the mission, the KSB undertook major curriculum reviews in 2013, 2014, and 2015 and now offers the following programs: a BBA degree in Business Management with 9 possible concentrations, a BBA in Finance and Investments, a BS degree in Business Management, a BS degree in Accounting, and a BS degree in Public Accounting and Business Management (150 hour). At the graduate level, the KSB offers an MSBA with a choice of five options. Following these curriculum changes, the school has worked toward developing overarching learning goals for all KSB students.

LEARNING GOALS

Infrastructure. Faculty ownership is considered essential to the development of learning goals and to the accreditation effort as a whole. Thus, a Steering Committee (composed of six faculty members and the Associate Dean) is charged with development and review of policies related to all Assurance of Learning (AoL) activities in the KSB. Five sub-committees report to the steering committee. Each sub-committee develops and refines conceptual/operational definitions, rubrics, and assessment procedures related to one of the learning goals. The sub-committees consist of three to four volunteer faculty members who expressed particular interest in a sub-committee’s assigned learning goal. The program also includes faculty course coordinators who report to their respective department chairs. There is a course coordinator for each of the multi-section foundation and business core courses in the BBA and BS degrees programs. Course coordinators review syllabi to assure that there is consistent content and learning goals across sections.

These various committees gather and evaluate data for recommendation to the Department and School Curriculum Committees. Sources of data include: (1) Surveys of alumni and employers; (2) Studies of the NYC job market; (3) Continuous employer/faculty interaction scheduled in collaboration with the Magner Career Center (MCC); (4) The annual Business Matters event and the Business Matters speaker series; (5) Benchmarking of AACSB competitors in the New York City area; (6) and nationally published

employer studies of needed 21st century undergraduate learning skills. Faculty effort and consensus has resulted in adoption of the following learning goals in all undergraduate programs in the KSB:

Written Communication: KSB students will be able to write effectively using appropriate language and business conventions in order to be understood in the business environment.

Operational definition: 80 % of KSB students will write a case study analysis at an “acceptable” or better level when evaluated with a written communication rubric.

Critical Thinking: Our students will be able to identify issues and problems, gather and interpret relevant data, evaluate assumptions, develop informed solutions and conclusions, and articulate consequences of proposed actions.

Operational definition: 80 % of KSB students will demonstrate “acceptable” or “better” critical thinking skills when analyzing a business case evaluated with a critical thinking rubric.

Information Literacy: Related to critical thinking, our students will be able to collect, analyze, synthesize and present data. They will demonstrate ethical conduct related to the use of data.

Operational definition: 80 % of KSB students will demonstrate “acceptable” or “better” information literacy skills when analyzing a business case evaluated with an information literacy rubric.

Ethical Awareness, Sensitivity and Managerial Competency: Our students will recognize ethical dilemmas, respond sensitively to parties involved, and translate ethical considerations into appropriate managerial action.

Operational definition: 80 % of KSB students will demonstrate “acceptable” or “better” ethical reasoning skills when analyzing a business case evaluated with an ethical reasoning rubric.

Quantitative Reasoning: Our students will have the ability to identify, apply, and utilize mathematical and statistical concepts, techniques, and tools to derive meaningful conclusions based on an analysis.

Operational definition: 80 % of KSB students will demonstrate a minimum grade of 80 % on a test of quantitative reasoning.

Learning goals for the KSB MSBA program are as follows:

Written communication: Graduate students will be able to write effectively using appropriate language and business conventions in order to be understood in the business environment.

Operational definition: 80 % of KSB graduate students will write a case study analysis at an “acceptable” or better level when evaluated with a written communication rubric.

Ethical Awareness, Sensitivity and Managerial Competency: Graduate students will recognize ethical dilemmas, respond sensitively to parties involved, and translate ethical considerations into appropriate managerial action.

Operational definition: 80 % of KSB graduate students will demonstrate “acceptable” or “better” ethical reasoning skills when analyzing a business case evaluated with an ethical reasoning rubric.

Critical Thinking: Graduate students will be able to identify issues and problems, gather and interpret relevant data, evaluate assumptions, develop informed solutions and conclusions, and articulate consequences of proposed actions.

Operational definition: 80 % of KSB graduate students will demonstrate “acceptable” or “better” critical thinking skills when analyzing a business case evaluated with a critical thinking rubric.

Quantitative Reasoning: Graduate students will have the ability to identify, apply, and utilize mathematical and statistical concepts, techniques, and tools to derive meaningful conclusions based on an analysis.

Operational definition: 80 % of KSB graduate students will demonstrate a minimum grade of 80 % on a test of quantitative reasoning.

Strategic Thinking: Graduate students will be able to demonstrate a holistic understanding of organizations and their environments; synthesize information from multiple sources; question prevalent concepts, perceptions, and mental models; and envision a desired future for an organization that provides a focus for all activities.

Operational Definition: 80% of KSB graduate students will demonstrate “acceptable” or “better” strategic thinking skills when analyzing a business case evaluated with a strategic thinking rubric.

RUBRICS

Each Learning Goal Sub-Committee identified or developed an assignment and appropriate rubric for the initial summative assessment of student mastery of its relevant learning goal. The rubrics for written communication, ethical reasoning, critical thinking, and information literacy were developed with slight modifications from the Value Rubric developed under the auspices of the American Association of American Colleges and Universities. As noted on the website:

The original VALUE initiative in 2007-09 involved teams of faculty and other educational professionals from over 100 higher education institutions engaged over many months to develop 16 VALUE rubrics for the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes. Each rubric was developed from the most frequently identified characteristics or criteria of learning for each of 16 learning outcomes. Drafts of each rubric were then tested by faculty with their own students’ work on over 100 college campuses”.

(<https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics>)

A decision was made by the Quantitative Reasoning Sub-Committee that the assessment method would be by test, which they developed using the Graduate Standards Admission Test program as a guide.

TIMETABLE

The schedule for the initial undergraduate summative assessments was developed by the faculty after considerable discussion on resources. The resulting schedule was as follows:

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Written Communication	Spring		Spring		
Ethical Reasoning		Spring		Spring	
Critical Thinking		Fall		Fall	
Information Literacy			Spring		Spring
Quantitative Reasoning		Fall		Fall	
Management of a Business Enterprise			Spring		Spring

A decision was made by the AoL Steering Committee in fall 2013 to focus initial efforts on written communication and ethical reasoning. There is substantial evidence from numerous sources that written communication is the most important skill for college graduates to succeed in the workplace. This was also found to be the case in the Employer and Alumni survey conducted in spring 2014. Employers rated written communication more important than sixteen other skill sets. Alumni rated this skill set third among the seventeen skills in terms of importance, but there was a substantial gap between this and their rating of how well prepared they were in this area by their education. Employers rated ethical reasoning fifth in order of importance, and alumni rated it among the top five skills.

The decision was made to focus initial assessment efforts on undergraduate programs as that represent almost 90% of our student body

Written communication was assessed in spring 2014 through a case study assignment administered to 50 students in 4 sections of the capstone business course. Ethical reasoning was assessed in Fall 2015 through a case study assignment administered to 110 students in 5 sections of the capstone business course. Data was gathered for assessment of quantitative reasoning, and critical thinking and analysis will be completed by early spring 2016.

RESULTS AND CLOSING THE LOOP

Written Communication. Results of the written communication assessment resulted in average ratings above the midpoint of the scale used in the rubric. However, the distribution of responses was bimodal with clusters of responses on the high end of the scale (mastery) and the low end (marginal). The median value on the 4-pt. scale was 3.0. Half of the students scored at or above “proficient” and half scored below (either marginal or unacceptable). It was also noticed that there were significant differences in student performance on the different criteria in the rubric. The poorest performance occurred on the mechanics and sentence structure criteria, less than 30% and 35% at or above “proficient”, respectively. The results caused concern among faculty in that students were performing well below the 80% proficiency rate desired.

Faculty decided that the initial response to the assessment results should be narrowly focused on helping students needing practice with sentence structure and mechanics. Many of the students performing poorly on the assessment are immigrants for whom English is a second language, and improvement could best be met through rewriting drafts over and over. It was decided that these students should receive immediate attention. Collaborating with the College Writing Fellows program, a part-time English Graduate Student was assigned to the KSB and located in the KSB Advising Office. Faculty members refer students to the tutor for writing help.

The Written Communication Sub-Committee recognized that improving performance on other, less remedial criteria of writing would require embedding more developmental writing activities in the core business courses. It was recognized that this would present difficult resource issues as many core courses were taught in large class sizes of 60 to 80 people. Discussion in the Curriculum Committees regarding how to effect more writing assignments continued during the fall of 2014 and spring of 2015 and culminated in Spring 2015 with a recommendation to the Dean that graduate assistants be assigned to a core course with an intensive writing assignment. The recommendation was accepted by the Dean.

In fall 2015, written case analysis assignments were embedded in all sections of the introductory marketing course. English graduate students have been assigned to this core course and evaluate student artifacts providing written edits and comments where appropriate. They also assess the student papers based on the written communication rubric. All papers not meeting a “proficient” writing level are being returned to students for a required rewrite. Papers will go through iterative rewrites until a student reaches “proficient” status on this rewrite. No student will receive a course grade until a satisfactory paper is completed.

Ethics. The first assessment of ethical reasoning was completed in spring 2015 in the capstone business course through a written case analysis. Student work was assessed by a faculty team, and the rubric specified three different dimensions of ethical reasoning. Ninety-two percent, 85.5%, and 90.9% of students scored at or above proficiency on ethical awareness, ethical sensitivity, and managerial and professional ethical considerations, respectively.

Despite the high scores, the Ethics Sub-committee thought there was room for improvement. Since the Written Communication Sub-committee was introducing an embedded written assignment in the core Marketing Class, the Department Curriculum Committee adopted a recommendation that the written assignment be related to ethics. Faculties developed an ethics module for inclusion in every section of the core marketing course in fall 2015 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qN-9tfMoWI>). The module includes video, case study, and a required assignment.

The next assessment of ethical reasoning will be done in Fall 2017.