

Weber State University
Annual Assessment of Evidence of Learning

Cover Page

Department/Program: Master of Professional Communication Program (Housed within the Communication Department)
Academic Year of Report: 2015/2016
Date Submitted: November 14, 2016
Report author: Dr. Sarah Steimel, Program Director

Contact Information:

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A. Brief Introductory Statement:

Please review the Introductory Statement and contact information for your department displayed on the assessment site: <http://www.weber.edu/portfolio/departments.html> - if this information is current, please indicate as much. No further information is needed. We will indicate "Last Reviewed: [current date]" on the page. If the information is not current, please provide an update:

- Contact information is out of date – Dr. Kathy Edwards has retired.
- New Contact information:

Dr. Sarah Steimel
Weber State University
1407 University Circle
Elizabeth Hall, room 346
(801) 626-6535

B. Mission Statement

Please review the Mission Statement for your department displayed on the assessment site:

<http://www.weber.edu/portfolio/departments.html> - if it is current, please indicate as much; we will mark the web page as “Last Reviewed [current date]”. No further information is needed.

If the information is not current, please provide an update:

- Mission statement is current.

C. Student Learning Outcomes

Please review the Student Learning Outcomes for your department displayed on the assessment site:

<http://www.weber.edu/portfolio/departments.html> - if they are current, please indicate as much; we will mark the web page as “Last Reviewed [current date]”. No further information is needed.

If they are not current, please provide an update:

- Student learning outcomes are current and up to date.

D. Curriculum

Please review the Curriculum Grid for your department displayed on the assessment site:

<http://www.weber.edu/portfolio/departments.html> - if it is current, please indicate as much; we will mark the web page as “Last Reviewed: [current data]”. No further information is needed.

If the curriculum grid is not current, please provide an update:

- Map is up to date, except for one course which has been renamed.
- The course previously listed as MPC 6000: Intro to Graduate Studies is now MPC 6010: Intro to Grad Studies and Communication Theory.
- The curriculum grid is still correct for that course, but the title and number of the course should reflect the update
- The rest of the curriculum grid is accurate, thank you.

E. Assessment Plan

Please review the Assessment Plan for your department displayed on the assessment site:

<http://www.weber.edu/portfolio/departments.html> - if the plan current, please indicate as much; we will mark the web page as “Last Reviewed [current date]”. No further information is needed.

If the plan is not current, please provide an update:

The site should contain an up-to-date assessment plan with planning going out a minimum of three years beyond the current year. Please review the plan displayed for your department at the above site. The plan should include a list of courses from which data will be gathered and the schedule, as well as an overview of the assessment strategy the department is using (for example, portfolios, or a combination of Chi assessment data and student survey information, or industry certification exams, etc.).

Please be sure to include your planned assessment of any general education courses taught within your department. This information will be used to update the General Education Improvement and Assessment Committee’s planning documentation.

- Assessment plan had fallen out of date.

Updated October 2016

Assessment Plan for Master of Professional Communication

Persons responsible for collecting and analyzing the data: The program director will oversee data collection. The MPC faculty advisory committee, which consists of all faculty teaching the required courses in a given academic year, will serve as the Assessment Committee to oversee and implement the program’s assessment plan. MPC faculty may be asked to collect and report data on assignments in their classes and may be asked to review papers and other artifacts for assessment purposes.

Assessment measures to be used: The MPC assessment plan examines student outcomes using the following direct and indirect measures.

Direct Measures (DM):

1. Student theses and projects submitted

2. Student performance on signature assignments with rubric in MPC 6010 Introduction to Grad Studies & Communication Theory
3. Student performance on signature assignments with rubric in MPC 6150 Writing for Professional Communicators
4. Student performance on signature assignments with rubric in MPC 6210 Presentational Speaking
5. Student performance on signature assignments with rubric in MPC 6700 Research Methods for Professional Communication
6. Student performance on signature assignments with rubric in cognate area courses: MPC 6100 Team Building and Facilitation, MPC 6250 Visual Communication, MPC 6300 New Media, MPC 6400 Leadership Communication, MPC 6450 Advanced Organizational Communication, and MPC 6600 Strategic Communication
7. Number of papers accepted for presentation at academic and professional conferences

Indirect Measures (IM):

1. Verbal and written feedback from individual graduates
2. Data on promotions and job placement, graduate and professional school acceptance, and other significant accomplishments

Goals

1. To assess core skill areas of writing, speaking, critical thinking and research methods on a semi-annual basis. For example, in 2014-15 we assessed writing and speaking. In 2015-16, we will assess critical thinking and research methods. In 2016-2017, we will again assess writing and speaking, etc.
2. To assess the core cognate courses on a rotating basis. These courses include MPC 6100 Team Building and Facilitation, MPC 6250 Visual Communication, MPC 6300 New Media, MPC 6400 Leadership Communication, MPC 6450 Advanced Organizational Communication, and MPC 6600 Strategic Communication. In 2015-16 we will assess MPC 6250 and MPC 6300. In 2016-2017, we will assess MPC 6100 and 6400, etc. As new courses are added to the core cognate areas, they will be worked into the assessment rotation.

3. To collect indirect measures every year, which include number of students/graduates who receive a promotion or a new job in a field related to professional communication, number of students accepted for further graduate study, individual feedback from students and graduates.

Master of Professional Communication

Assessment Plan

Updated October 2016

Assessment Plan for Master of Professional Communication

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Direct Measures (DM):

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11. Student performance on signature assignments with rubric in MPC 6210 Presentational Speaking
12. Student performance on signature assignments with rubric in MPC 6700 Research Methods for Professional Communication
13. Student performance on signature assignments with rubric in cognate area courses: MPC 6100 Team Building and Facilitation, MPC 6250 Visual Communication, MPC 6300 New Media, MPC 6400 Leadership Communication, MPC 6450 Advanced Organizational Communication, and MPC 6600 Strategic Communication

14. Number of papers accepted for presentation at academic and professional conferences

Indirect Measures (IM):

3. Verbal and written feedback from individual graduates
4. Data on promotions and job placement, graduate and professional school acceptance, and other significant accomplishments

Goals

4. To assess core skill areas of writing, speaking, critical thinking and research methods on a semi-annual basis. For example, in 2014-15 we assessed writing and speaking. In 2015-16, we will assess critical thinking and research methods. In 2016-2017, we will again assess writing and speaking, etc.
5. To assess the core cognate courses on a rotating basis. These courses include MPC 6100 Team Building and Facilitation, MPC 6250 Visual Communication, MPC 6300 New Media, MPC 6400 Leadership Communication, MPC 6450 Advanced Organizational Communication, and MPC 6600 Strategic Communication. In 2015-16 we will assess MPC 6250 and MPC 6300. In 2016-2017, we will assess MPC 6100 and 6400, etc. As new courses are added to the core cognate areas, they will be worked into the assessment rotation.
6. To collect indirect measures every year, which include number of students/graduates who receive a promotion or a new job in a field related to professional communication, number of students accepted for further graduate study, individual feedback from students and graduates.

F. Report of assessment results for the most previous academic year:

There are a variety of ways in which departments can choose to show evidence of learning. This is one example. The critical pieces to include are 1) what learning outcome is being assessed, 2) what method of measurement was used, 3) what the threshold for ‘acceptable performance’ is for that measurement, 4) what the actual results of the assessment were, 5) how those findings are interpreted, and 6) what is the course of action to be taken based upon the interpretation.

a. Evidence of Learning: Courses within the Major
(duplicate this page as needed)

Evidence of Learning: Courses within the Major					
Measurable Learning Outcome	Method of Measurement	Threshold for Evidence of Student Learning	Findings Linked to Learning Outcomes	Interpretation of Findings	Action Plan/Use of Results
Students will...	Direct and Indirect Measures*				
Learning Outcome 1: Demonstrate critical thinking in applied communication contexts	Measure 1: Final written paper in MPC 6010	Measure 1: 75% of students will score “strong” in this area (based on final assignment rubric)	Measure 1: 76% were strong (n = 16); 19% were adequate (n = 4) and 5% (n = 1) were inadequate.	Measure 1: The majority of students are graduating with strong applied critical thinking skills, though there are some students who could improve in this area.	Measures 1&2: Pairing 6010 and 6700 appears to be a helpful progression in our program because it allows students to continue refining applied critical thinking to an in-depth project across two courses. We may want to look at pairing other courses in the curriculum.
	Measure 2: Final written project in MPC 6700	Measure 2: 75% of students will score “strong” in this area (based on final assignment rubric)	Measure 2: 81.8% were strong; 18.2% were adequate	Measure 2: This is now the second course in a sequence (we have paired it with MPC 6010, so that students take 6010 first and 6700 second). It is nice to see that students have improved in their critical thinking skills as they progress through the sequence of courses	

Evidence of Learning: Courses within the Major					
Measurable Learning Outcome	Method of Measurement	Threshold for Evidence of Student Learning	Findings Linked to Learning Outcomes	Interpretation of Findings	Action Plan/Use of Results
Students will...	Direct and Indirect Measures*				
	Measure 3: Final Thesis & Masters' Projects	Measure 3: 75% of students will score "strong" in this area (based on faculty advisors' assessment of final thesis)	Measure 3: 80 % of students (n = 4) scored "strong" in this area. 20% (n = 1) scored adequate.	Measure 3: Most students who choose to complete a thesis or project do demonstrate "strong" in critical thinking by the end of the program.	Measure 3: Continue to emphasize applied/critical thinking skills throughout program.
Learning Outcome 2: Conduct academic or applied research in communication contexts, report findings clearly and accurately, and interpret the meaning of research data.	Measure 1: Final written project in MPC 6700	Measure 1: 75% of students will score "strong" in this area (based on final assignment rubric)	Measure 1: 69.2% scored strong; 31.8% scored adequate.	Measure 1: Many of our students have developed strong research skills by the end of 6700, though not as many as we had hoped. 6700 is taken in the students' first semester in the MPC program, and it may simply be that it takes more time for at least 75% of students to become "strong" in this difficult skill.	Measure 1: Continue to emphasize applied research skills throughout program. We will need to work to determine how to measure research skills further along in the program for students who select the "coursework" so that we can see progress in this area beyond the first semester.
	Measure 2: Final Thesis Projects	Measure 2: 75% of students will score "strong" in this area (based on faculty advisors' assessment of final thesis)	Measure 2: 80 % of students (n = 4) scored "strong" in this area. 20% (n = 1) scored adequate.	Measure 2: Most students who choose to complete a thesis or project do demonstrate "strong" in applied research method by the end of the program.	Measure 2: Continue to emphasize applied research skills throughout program. We will need to work to determine how to measure research

Evidence of Learning: Courses within the Major					
Measurable Learning Outcome	Method of Measurement	Threshold for Evidence of Student Learning	Findings Linked to Learning Outcomes	Interpretation of Findings	Action Plan/Use of Results
Students will...	Direct and Indirect Measures*				
					skills further along in the program for students who select the "coursework" track.
Learning Outcome 3: Demonstrate knowledge in one or more cognate areas – (This semester: visual communication & new media.)	Measure 1: Final project in MPC 6350 (Visual Communication)	Measure 1: 75% of students will score "strong" in this area (based on final assignment rubric)	Measure 1: Strong - 66.66% (n=8) Adequate - 25% (n=3) Inadequate - 8.33% (n=1)	Measure 1: Students may need more practice learning how to apply visual communication principles in organizational contexts.	Measure 1: Look at integrating more visual communication content in other allied classes (e.g. New Media, below).
	Measure 2: Final project in MPC 6300(New Media)	Measure 2: 75% of students will score "strong" in this area (based on final assignment rubric)	Measure 2: 93% were strong and 7% were adequate.	Measure 2: This is an interesting course because students come in with very different backgrounds. According to the instructor, "30% had some general background in New Media before starting the class. and another 30% had never touched the stuff." So, overall proficiency at the end of course may be higher because some students have a background in the skills, but given that many do not, this class	Measure 2: Look at integrating more visual communication content in this course to help students reach proficiency in that allied skill (see above comments on Measure 1). Continue emphasizing both visual communication and new media throughout the curriculum.

Evidence of Learning: Courses within the Major					
Measurable Learning Outcome	Method of Measurement	Threshold for Evidence of Student Learning	Findings Linked to Learning Outcomes	Interpretation of Findings	Action Plan/Use of Results
Students will...	Direct and Indirect Measures*				
				appears to be doing a good job teaching new media skills.	

*At least one measure per objective must be a direct measure; indirect measures may be used to supplement direct measure(s).

b. Evidence of Learning: High Impact or Service Learning
(duplicate this page as needed)

- N/A, although some students complete applied projects as part of their graduate coursework.

c. Evidence of Learning: General Education Courses

(duplicate this page as needed or delete if department does not offer GE courses)

- Deleted because we do not offer GE courses.

G. Summary of Artifact Collection Procedure

Artifact	Learning Outcome Measured	When/How Collected?	Where Stored?
2015-2016 Thesis Projects	Critical Thinking & Research Methods (Outcomes 1 & 2 above)	End of Semester/School Year	Electronic Copies Stored in Digital Repository in WSU Library
Signature Assignments and rubrics in MPC 6010 (Intro to Grad Studies and Communication Theory)	Critical Thinking (Outcome 1 above)	Class papers and projects, feedback to students once/year, assessment rubric completed by instructor	Canvas
Signature Assignments and rubrics in MPC 6700 (Research Methods for Professional Communication)	Critical Thinking & Research Methods (Outcomes 1 & 2 above)	Class papers and projects, feedback to students once/year, assessment rubric completed by instructor	Canvas
Signature Assignments and rubrics in MPC 6300 (Visual Communication)	Knowledge in one or more cognate areas [Vis Comm] (Outcome 3 Above)	Class papers and projects, feedback to students once/year, assessment rubric completed by instructor	Canvas
Signature Assignments and rubrics in MPC 6700 (New Media)	Knowledge in one or more cognate areas [New Media] (Outcome 3 Above)	Class papers and projects, feedback to students once/year, assessment rubric completed by instructor	Canvas

Summary Information (as needed)

Appendix A

(Delete this page if it is not needed)

Report of progress on ‘non-learning-outcome recommendations’ from previous 5 year program review (optional):

Date of Program Review: 2014-2015	Recommendation	Progress Description
<p>Recommendation 1 - Keep the applied focus. Embrace the MPC focus rather than trying to become an MA in Communication.</p>	<p>Since this is a specialized Master’s program, it might be expected that forces could inadvertently direct it toward conformity with more traditional Masters programs. Examples might include a greater emphasis on conference presentations than professional activities in assessment or an increase in incoming students from academic rather than professional areas. The program has discovered an especially important niche and needs to continually keep its eye on its mission.</p>	<p>1. We currently track students and alumni who get new jobs or promotions while they are in school and after graduation. We also track the number of students who present papers at academic and professional conferences. We will give equal weight to both kinds of student successes in future reports.</p> <p>2. We continue to develop our Facebook page and LinkedIn account for the MPC program. They both feature news about current students and the successes of our alumni. The Facebook page allows us to show our students and alumni actively engaged in professional activities. The LinkedIn page allows us to showcase professional successes (alumni promotions, new jobs, etc.) and also allows alumni to share potential professional job opportunities with each other.</p>

		<p>3. We have created promotional materials using our students and alumni as spokespersons to promote the program. We feature their name and professional job title to demonstrate the successes of our graduates. We continue in this effort (for example, we are filming new promotional videos featuring two professionally successful alumni in December 2016).</p>
<p>Recommendation 2 - Assessment for coursework track</p>	<p>Develop measures to assess the newly implemented coursework option in lieu of a thesis or project.</p>	<p>1. After looking at our graduates' transcripts, most of our graduates who pursue the coursework track take additional courses in the "core required courses" area. E.g. they are required to take 4/6, but many of our coursework graduates take a 5th or 6th course from the list. This is the most common way students earn coursework credit from our department. We have updated this year's assessment plan to make sure all six of those courses get assessed on a consistent, rotating basis.</p>
		<p>2. We collected assessment data in two of those core courses this year (MPC 6300 and MPC 6250) focused on student proficiency in that cognate area.</p>
		<p>3. We will continue to explore options for best assessing the coursework track.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3 - Recruiting</p>	<p>Recruit a larger applicant pool. When resources become available for</p>	<p>1. We ran a large internet/digital marketing campaign in 2015-2016 that</p>

	<p>additional staff positions, hire a professional staff member to help with recruiting.</p>	<p>appears to have generated larger application numbers. In April 2016, we had 33 students apply and we were able to admit about 23, for a rejection rate of about 30%. We did not accept applications in July 2016 because we had a full class. In November 2016, we received 21 applications (we haven't finalized admissions decisions yet, but we will be able to admit fewer than 50% of those students, providing a rejection rate of >50%). This increasing quantity of applications has allowed us to increase quality of students admitted. We will continue such campaigns in the future.</p> <p>2. We sponsor the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) spring conference each year as a recruitment and promotion opportunity. The sponsorship includes a recruiting table at the event, along with inclusion of our name and logo on materials promoting the event. We also agreed this year to sponsor the Golden Spike Awards (another PR Awards ceremony held in SLC in December). We are looking for other conferences to attend or sponsor that would be relevant for communication professionals along the Wasatch Front.</p>
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		3. We are in ongoing talks with our new Dean about a potential for a college-wide recruiter.
Recommendation 4 - External advisory board	Present evidence of the contributions of the external advisory board in the next program review.	1. As mentioned in the program review report, the external advisory committee was created in Fall 2015 and had only met one time before the report was due. Now that we have created an external advisory board, we will seek their input and report on their recommendations and subsequent actions taken in the next program review.
		2. Due to the MPC leadership transition, the external advisory board has not met recently. We will arrange a meeting in Spring 2017.
Recommendation 5 - Student and faculty travel budget	Allocate additional resources for student travel to present at conferences and for faculty to travel to professional conferences for professional development and to enhance teaching.	1. We have budgeted for student travel to conferences for the past two years. So far three students have used these travel funds.
		2. We have a faculty travel budget, but so far we have used it for travel related to recruitment rather than professional development.
		3. Now that our base budget is set, explore the viability of a process for faculty to apply for professional development travel funds. These funds should be earmarked for professional conferences that enhance teaching (beyond the scope of the academic

		conferences that are funded through other means).
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Appendix B

Please provide the following information about the full-time and adjunct faculty contracted by your department during the last academic year (summer through spring). Gathering this information each year will help with the headcount reporting that must be done for the final Five Year Program Review document that is shared with the State Board of Regents.

Faculty	
Headcount (Full time in Comm/MPC, not all Comm faculty teach in the MPC program)	21
With Doctoral Degrees (Including MFA and other terminal degrees, as specified by the institution)	16
Full-time Tenured	6
Full-time Non-Tenured (includes tenure-track)	9
Part-time	1
With Master's Degrees	7
Full-time Tenured	
Full-time Non-Tenured	6
Part-time	1
With Bachelor's Degrees	N/A
Full-time Tenured	
Full-time Non-tenured	
Part-time	
Other	N/A
Full-time Tenured	
Full-time Non-tenured	
Part-time	
Total Headcount Faculty	23
Full-time Tenured	6
Full-time Non-tenured	15
Part-time	2

Please respond to the following questions.

- 1) Reflecting on this year's assessment(s), how does the evidence of student learning impact your faculty's confidence in the program being reviewed; how does that analysis change when compared with previous assessment evidence?

Overall, we think this year's program review indicates that our program is preparing our students with the "advanced communication skills working professionals need to succeed in today's rapidly evolving and technologically complex world" (per our mission statement).

In critical thinking, the pairing of MPC 6010 and MPC 6700 appears to have benefitted our students in terms of critical thinking. There is evidence above that the number of students demonstrating "strong" critical thinking skills improved from MPC 6010 to MPC 6700 and remained high through the MPC 6900 thesis/project class (for those who took it). These results could not be fully compared with previous years because for some reason critical thinking was not evaluated during the last three years' reports available on the Institutional Effectiveness Website.

In research methods, we did see a small decline in proficiency in 6700 (Research Methods). In the 2012-2013 report, 81% of students were rated strong and 19% were rated adequate. However, there are two complicating factors. First, in that year, research methods was taken during students' second or third semester in the program (rather than in the first semester, as it is now). Thus, students had more time to acquire and polish those skills. Second, it isn't clear from the 2012-2013 report whether Research skills were measured in BOTH the 6700 and 6900 (thesis/project) class. It appears it might have been just in the 6900 (thesis/project class). If that is the case, then we are actually remaining consistent. Though this year only 69.2% of students were strong in their research skills at the end of MPC 6700, 80% of those who did the 6900 thesis/project were rated as strong. Therefore, I think we can remain confident that we are providing research skills while continuing, as a group of faculty, to think about how to integrate research throughout the curriculum and better measure the end-of-program research skills of students who graduate without doing a thesis/project.

Based on my records, neither Visual Communication nor New Media (two of our six cognate areas) had ever been assessed. So, it is difficult to compare to previous results. The assessment outcome of Visual Communication this year was lower than was hoped (only 66.66% of students were rated as "strong"). However, this provides us a useful baseline moving forward. We will begin conversations among the faculty who teach in the cognate areas about integrating more visual communication throughout the curriculum. 93% of the students were rated "strong" in New Media skills, which provides us a rather high baseline moving forward.

- 2) With whom did you share the results of the year's assessment efforts?
Communication/MPC Faculty, the Chair of the Department of Communication, the office of Institutional Effectiveness, the Dean of Arts & Humanities, and our External Advisory Group.
- 3) Based on your program's assessment findings, what subsequent action will your program take?
- Integration of MPC 6010 and 6700 as a paired sequence of classes appears to have really benefited students in their overall critical thinking skills. As a program, we should investigate whether additional class pairings or better planned sequences can improve our students' outcomes in other areas without sacrificing the flexibility and customization students value in our program
 - We may need to re-evaluate the level of research methods proficiency possible in graduate students' first semester (perhaps a standard of 75% strong in MPC 6700 is too high, given that that class is taken in the first semester). We need to also investigate how to better measure research methods proficiency later in the program for students who do not complete the thesis/project path.
 - We need to better integrate the "cognate" skill areas in more classes so that the students can reach higher levels of proficiency. For example, adding more visual communication components in other courses would likely increase the number of students who reach a "strong" proficiency in MPC 6350.
 - This year's significant increase in marketing/communication efforts appear to be improving quantity/quality of applicants as suggested by our program review. We will continue these efforts.
 - We will be calling another meeting of our Advisory Group in Spring, 2017 to share these results with them and to see greater guidance on how we can improve going forward.