THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
OFFICE OF STUDENT
LEARNING OUTCOMES
ASSESSMENT AND
ACCREDITATION

Annual Report to the Faculty Senate
(February 5, 2025)

The **2024** update on learning outcomes assessment (2023-2024 academic assessment reporting year) reaffirms that undergraduate program assessment is acknowledged as a shared responsibility and demonstrates a regular and ongoing commitment to understanding student learning and student success. Data and results from outcomes assessment activities are examined in the aggregate only and are not used to evaluate individual faculty nor students, but to improve learning opportunities for all students.

This report is submitted by the Office of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment and Accreditation, and in partial fulfillment of the charge outlined for the new joint Provost Office and Faculty Senate Committee: *Joint Committee on Academic Program Review and Outcomes Assessment* (JCAPROA, Spring, 2024).

SUMMARY OF INSTITUTION WIDE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES: SPRING 2024, COHORT I

The summary of biennial outcomes assessment reporting which follows presents results for Cohort I undergraduate programs who reported in spring 2024 (last reported 2022[1]). This report also provides an opportunity to publicly acknowledge faculty and programs identified through peer review for excellence in assessment reporting, to recognize all programs who engaged in this effort, and to summarize the support provided to faculty developing new programs.

Item #1:

NEW PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PLANS[2]

During the period that the Learning Outcomes Oversight Committee (LOOC) has been paused and JCAPROA established (spring 2024) and working toward full committee implementation (subsuming the responsibilities of LOOC and the Academic Program Review Committee), provisional[3] approval of assessment plans continues to be granted to faculty seeking to launch new programs. This process has maintained curricular innovation in support of strategic goals, while complying with the Faculty Senate "new program" proposal process. Assessment Plans are a critical part of a complete new program proposal package (ref: University Manual 8.85.14.).

Fall 2023 to Fall 2024: The Assessment Office provided consultation, support and feedback to faculty developing assessment plans, which includes the articulation of program goal(s), learning outcomes, and the curriculum map, for the following academic programs and certificates:
Programs: Grad (7); UG (2)
Certificates, Grad (9); UG (2)

Academic Programs

Graduate:

Applied Science Communication MA
Computational Social Science PhD
Education Leadership & Policy MA
Mental and Behavioral Health Counseling MS

[1] A "report cycle" includes all programs assigned to a given cohort and reports from programs in the *prior* cohort who did not report when expected and are asked to submit a mid-cycle plan.
[2] Not all programs will have completed the approval process at the time of this update.
[3] Provisional approval of plans pending JCAPROA becoming fully operational and able to execute all areas of responsibilities outlined within the University Manual (8.85.14) and the Committee charge.

Doctor of Nursing Practice DNP
Professional MS in Management
Engineering Management and Leadership, MS

Undergraduate:
Business Studies BA
Environmental Arts and Humanities

Certificates

Graduate:
Cellular and Molecular Biology
College Teaching
Industry 4.0
Methods and Practices for Science Storytelling
Ocean Science Grad
Community Planning
Nuclear Engineering
Ocean Policy and Science
Underwater Acoustics

Undergraduate:
Nuclear Engineering
Honors Business Leadership

Item #2:

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PROCESS REVIEW AND UPDATE

Program-level assessment is the process used to document and demonstrate a commitment to understanding student learning and uncovering ways to improve the educational experience for all students in an academic program at URI.

Since 2012, the University of Rhode Island has followed a two cohort system for biennial reporting for all accredited and non-accredited academic programs with a mix of graduate and undergraduate programs expected to report every other year. The programs report using the NECHE Series E templates as the University's tool to capture faculty effort to check on learning within a curriculum and across a program. A third type of report template, the Interim Planning report, was developed internally as an assessment planning tool option to allow a program extra time to develop a meaningful assessment project, to follow up on results from a prior report, or to ensure programs are on track for a successful assessment project if they did not report with their cohort as expected.

Process Update: In response to different stakeholder goals:

- Beginning summer 2023: the Graduate School began coordinating the learning outcomes assessment for all graduate programs within a comprehensive student success framework. This approach includes shifting to a 3-year cycle by college, and adopting a unique report form that focuses more broadly on student success inclusive of learning outcomes achievement.
- Beginning summer 2024: the College of Arts & Sciences worked with the Assessment Office to

adopt a 3-year reporting cycle, piloting a move from a 2-year cycle in an effort to engage more faculty, expand data collection, and explore findings more deeply.

Two reporting deadlines continue to be offered to all reporting undergraduate programs: *Option 1:* Submit the report on or before graduation, per the faculty contract and Faculty Senate policy; *Option 2:* Extended submission date 2-weeks following graduation to accommodate faculty who prefer extra time following grading and graduation demands.

Item #3:

ANNUAL RESULTS ON BIENNIAL COHORT-BASED ASSESSMENT REPORTING

Success in reporting is defined by two metrics. 1) Compliance scores represent the number of programs who engaged in outcomes assessment reporting; 2) report quality scores represent the degree to which programs used best practices in outcomes assessment to examine student learning[2]. Both metrics are evaluated by peer reviewers using published rubrics to score the reports during a summer retreat. Peer review of all reports occurs in June/July. Programs receive feedback in August/September 2024, followed by the Deans Offices receiving institution- and college-level reporting summaries.

REPORTING EXPECTATIONS (2024):

Total number of non-accredited reports due in 2024: 30

- 29 Cohort I non-accredited programs submit full report; 6 were exempt; **23** expected
- 7 Cohort II non-accredited programs submit interim reports; **7** expected

Total number of accredited reports due in 2024: **12**

COHORT I, SPRING 2024 INSTITUTION-LEVEL ASSESSMENT REPORT RESULTS

SUBMITTED A TRADITIONAL, COMPLETE NON ACCREDITED REPORT

Non-Accredited Programs: Series E1A report template was adapted to include two sections. All programs are expected to complete Section I each round (new work); expectations for completing Section II (follow-up on prior reporting) are determined by the program, based on results, feasibility and learning improvement priorities.

Sec I*. New assessment activity – programs examine a new outcome each cycle, or an outcome Is re-examined in a new way (required by all programs each round unless exceptions are made):*
23 undergraduate reports expected: 23 submitted **(100%**)
18/23 met or exceeded expectations for using best practices in assessment (does not reference student learning results) (**78.3%**)

Sec II. *Follow-up on prior assessment activity - programs follow-up on recommendations from the prior round of reporting (2022) as needed; this is expected when a program makes a recommendation(s) for change and improvement:*
13 undergraduate reports expected: 13 submitted (**100**%);
9/13 met or exceeded expectations for using best practices in assessment (does not reference student learning results) **(69.2%**)

SUBMITTED INTERIM PLANNING REPORTS

Non-accredited programs only; this option available only through the Assessment Office:
Sec I. New Assessment Activity:
7 undergraduate reports: 5 submitted (71.4%);

5/5 met or exceeded expectations for using best practices in assessment (does not reference student learning results) (**100%**)

[2]Beginning in 2016, accredited programs use a streamlined report template.

SUBMITTED A TRADITIONAL, COMPLETE ACCREDITED REPORT

Accredited Programs: Series E1B and S report template has two sections to capture summary information and metrics:

12 undergraduate reports: 12 submitted **(100%**);

11/12 met or exceeded expectations* in providing the topline information (not student learning results) (**91.7%**)

*Typically missing information.

EXEMPT FROM REPORTING THIS ROUND

This option indicates program engagement and acknowledges special circumstances which precluded useful program assessment reporting. Exempted programs have an interim planning report due mid-cycle, spring 2025, which ensures they are supported to be on track for program-level assessment reporting going forward:

6 undergraduate programs were given this option in spring 2024

Item #4:

RECOGNITION[1] FOR EXCELLENCE IN OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Assessment reports are evaluated during a 3-day summer retreat, following a 2-day training and norming session for faculty peer reviewers using faculty teams, and a third level of oversight to review reports. In 2024, eight faculty members served on peer review teams for the first round of review (Level 1). Each reviewer also served as an independent reviewer (Level 2), for assigned reports providing oversight to ensure consistency in the review and scoring process. Scoring rubrics are used to guide the review of all assessment report templates (accredited, non-accredited, interim reports).

To meet expectations in the reporting process, all program reports are expected to achieve a score of "Satisfactory". The rubric scores assigned by peer reviewers are not evaluations of individual instructors or the student learning outcomes presented in the report. Instead, they reflect the level of achievement of programs in their effort to use best practices and processes to conduct assessment in order to yield valid and reliable data around student learning. The purpose of the outcomes assessment process is for programs to identify, beyond grades, how they know if students are learning, which students are not learning, and to document the use of data to prompt intervention when and where it is necessary, actively responding to results.

The use of a peer review process and a rubric scoring tool provides the opportunity to identify faculty and programs undertaking best practices in learning outcomes assessment. Each year, faculty who's reports peer reviewers scored as exceeding expectations are recognized for their excellence in assessment practice. Recognition is determined by the aggregate of item- and domain-level rubric scores which include such criteria as the strength of the assessment process used to investigate student learning, engagement of faculty, reflection on results, and plans for responding to findings, proposing and implementing interventions to support learning improvement when needed.

[1]Recognition is currently available for non-accredited undergraduate programs only. This does not diminish the content nor effort of accredited program reports, but reflects the difference in the streamlined accredited report template which requires summary content and metrics that are typically readily available, versus coordinating the reporting on assessment activity for a nonaccredited program which requires authentic direct measures of student learning.

The scoring legend used to review non-accredited program reports follows:

Advanced: Exceeded expectations
Satisfactory: Met expectations
Developing: Did not meet expectations; room for improvement identified
Missing: Items within the report or a section(s) were not provided.
N/A: Report results were not yet available (due to timing, resources, etc.), *or* a Section of the report was not expected (no prior recommendations were made or there was no prior report)

REPORT RECOGNITION

The following seven programs received top recognition for excellence in assessment reporting by demonstrating use of strong assessment processes and providing meaningful documentation. Summaries of these exemplar program assessment projects follow below.

Program	Department	College	Faculty Member(s) Submitting Report
Undergraduate			
Animal Science and Technology, BS	Fisheries, Animal, and Veterinary Sciences	College of Environment and Life Sciences	**Justin Richard**
Data Science, BS	Data Science	College of Arts and Sciences	**Natallia Katenka**
Health Studies, BS	Public Health	College of Health Sciences	**Molly Greaney** **Natalie Sabik**
Interdisciplinary Neuroscience, BS	Interdisciplinary Neuroscience	Graduate School	**Jessica Alber** **Vanessa Harwood** **Nicole Logan**
International Studies and Diplomacy, BS	Political Science	College of Arts and Sciences	**LeAnne Spino-Seijas**
Mathematics, BA, BS	Mathematics and Applied Mathematical Science	College of Arts and Sciences	**Bill Kinnersley** **Li Wu**
Political Science, BA	Political Science	College of Arts and Sciences	**Marc Hutchison** **Ashlea Rundlett**
Biology/Biological Sciences, BA BS	Biological Sciences	College of Environment and Life Sciences	**Evan Preisser**

The following programs are recognized for use of strong assessment practices and engagement in the assessment process this round:

Program	Department	College	Faculty Member(s) Submitting Report
Undergraduate			
Cellular and Molecular Biology, BA	Cell and Molecular Biology	College of Environment and Life Sciences	**J.M. Chandlee**
Communicative Disorders, BS	Communicative Disorders	College of Health Sciences	**Bethany Milner**
Computer Science, BA BS	Computer Science and Statistics	College of Arts and Sciences	**Vic Fay-Wolfe**
Economics, BA	Economics	College of Arts and	**Liam Malloy**

		Sciences	**Chris Briggs**
Environmental and Natural Resource Economics, BS	Environmental and Natural Resource Economics	College of Environment and Life Sciences	**Simona Trandafir**
Film Media, BA	The Harrington School of Communication and Media	College of Arts and Sciences	**Rebecca Romanow**
Geology and Geological Oceanography, BS	Geosciences	College of Environment and Life Sciences	**Brian Savage**
Marine Affairs, BA BS	Marine Affairs	College of Environment and Life Sciences	**Amelia Moore**
Nutrition, BS	Nutrition	College of Health Sciences	**Sara Larson, Amanda Missimer, and Kim Koness**
Sports Media and Communications, BA	The Harrington School of Communication and Media	College of Arts and Sciences	**Matt Hodler** **Jerry Jalette**
Theatre, BA BFA	Theatre	College of Arts and Sciences	**Rachel Walshe**
Wildlife and Conservation Biology, BS	Natural Resources Science	College of Environment and Life Sciences	**Chris Floyd**

The following programs engaged in the assessment process this round:

Program	Department	College	Faculty Member(s) Submitting Report
Undergraduate			
Marine Biology, BS	Biological Sciences	College of Environment and Life Sciences	**Jacqueline F. Webb**
Physics, BA BS	Physics	College of Arts and Sciences	**David Heskett**
Studio Art, BFA BA	Art and Art History	College of Arts and Sciences	**Clarisa E. Carubin** **Ben Anderson**

ASSESSMENT PROJECT SUMMARIES FOR EXEMPLAR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Data Science, BS

Lead Writer: Natallia Katenka

This is a newer program and this was the first program-level assessment report. Faculty chose to examine learning in the first required course for the major looking for established foundational knowledge and skills in 3 areas of learning: coherence, visualization and validity noting that there was improvement in all 3 criteria between years which was attributed to the introduction of preliminary feedback provided to students on their projects. Final project grades were also reviewed. This program used a comprehensive and thoughtful assessment process which resulted in the two pedagogical recommendations going forward: spending more time on a challenging content area, and the use of preliminary feedback to improve student learning. Faculty are using this first assessment experience to plan ahead for the next reporting cycle to pursue another outcome related to the same content area.

International Studies and Diplomacy, BS

Lead Writer: LeAnne Spino-Seijas

As an interdisciplinary major, this program relies on other programs to deliver their required and elective curriculum. This can create challenges for measuring student learning, however, required study abroad and language proficiency expectations provide an opportunity to assess learning using pre/post study abroad evaluations and a validated language proficiency scale which ensures reliable data on student

language acquisition and skills. Results indicated overall improvement in language proficiency from the study abroad experience, and noted the degree of difficulty of the language impacted the improvement. Regardless of the success found, the program identified several changes to improve the strength of their testing protocol. among them: an improved pre/post testing timeline, site-specific suggestions for students, a course on language development so students understand how to learn best.

Mathematics, BA, BS
Lead Writer: Bill Kinnersley and Li Wu
Faculty examined student's ability to use methods to solve problems in other disciplines, focusing mostly on upper level students with results for the BA versus BS majors provided. Answers to exam questions were used to evaluate achievement using a rubric with defined levels of criteria which generated results that indicate the strength of all students to *interpret* a problem. Results also indicated an area of strength for the BA majors (most are education double majors) in *presentation* which highlights their professional need to explain mathematics. This round, areas for improvement to the assessment process were identified including planning ahead for alignment of the assignments/student work to rubric criteria used for assessment to be able to confirm students are being asked to achieve all aspects of the outcome. Additionally, plans to conduct the next round of assessment included updates to the curriculum map, sampling methods, and expanded faculty engagement.

Political Science, BA
Lead Writer: Marc Hutchison and Ashlea Rundlett
The program examined student learning for all 4 outcomes critical for graduates to master, using multiple semesters, lower and upper-level courses, and multiple types of student work including quizzes, assignments, and a capstone which are aligned to shared criteria. Looking across the curriculum provides insight into the building of knowledge and skills. Faculty regularly share the results and implement changes to improve learning including by retaining the best of the online pedagogical components (embedding video lectures), integrating applied learning opportunities within courses such as lab sessions, and including opportunities for students to apply their knowledge within discussion sessions. Faculty found that students performed better when asked to apply knowledge than memorize and relay, and are considering shifting the format of teaching *and* assessment for one outcome.

COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LIFE SCIENCES

Animal Science and Technology, BS
Lead Writer: Justin Richard
The program provided an update on their collaborative efforts to improve outcome statements, follow-up on prior assessment work, and planning for current and future learning outcomes assessment which includes their intent to begin to assess all outcomes every cycle and continuously check on student achievement.

The report is both a guide for an excellent, thoughtful and meaningful assessment process because of the leadership and the faculty engagement and participation, as well as a sophisticated model of program-level assessment practice. Simplifying and improving learning outcomes clarified essential learning for graduates, focused on a common core for 2 tracks in the majors, and defined by the shared articulation of 12 skill components within 3 outcomes that guide the alignment of assignments and outcome expectations across courses.

This round, the program collected student work from across the curriculum on the student's ability to integrate cross disciplinary knowledge in providing care (theoretical and practical) yielding learning data which could be undiscovered due to the typically high success of their graduates. Several changes were recommended both to improve scaffolding and reinforcement of skills, specifically communication gaps in data, to check on validation of scoring across faculty, and to enhance student's ability to achieve the milestone level 1 for learning across all skill areas through a faculty focus on pedagogy.

Additionally, the program noted that they have embedded communication skills within each outcome within the context of knowledge or skills and shared that their new plan is so thoughtfully designed that faculty have flexibility rather than limitations in helping students achieve outcomes through course and assignment design due to the clarity of expectations at different points in the curriculum.

Lastly, the program reported on improvements to their process in data collection which allows faculty flexible and efficient ways to submit their student learning data. The program reports that this multi-level examination of learning throughout the curriculum supports a more inclusive evaluation of learning.

Biology/Biological Sciences, BA, BS
Lead Writer: Evan Preisser
The program extended their investigation into learning by incorporating learning results from prior reporting to look more closely for patterns of strength or weakness within the major. They examined results at 2 course-levels, incorporated student demographics to dive more deeply into results across multiple courses and engaged several faculty. While students achieved expectations for learning at all levels, some areas for reinforcement surfaced for faculty to address, including in the lower-level courses, students need more training in the link between genes, traits, and the environment connected to evolution, and applying genetic concepts in natural selection; at the 200 level, more opportunity is needed for students to understand non-Darwinian mechanisms of evolution. The program was pleased that results for BIO majors and nonmajors in the lower-level courses were similar, however, in upper-level courses, BIO majors scores exceeded nonmajors indicating a strong developmental curriculum is building the foundation of evolutionary principles for majors. While the program was pleased with results, several options for further improving and reinforcing learning were identified.

COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Health Studies, BS
Lead Writer: Molly Greaney and Natalie Sabik
The commitment to continuous improvement is evident through the detailed collection and examination of student work used for assessment as well as the reflection on results. The performance of students by academic classification is well documented and offers another dimension to the discussion of the results. Each action step provides for direction and insight about the program's future enhancements and modifications. Program accountability for student performance is highlighted in a clear timeline for reassessment in each course in an effort to achieve higher level of student proficiency.

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Interdisciplinary Neuroscience, BS
Lead Writer: Jessica Alber, Vanessa Harwood, and Nicole Logan
The interdisciplinary Neuroscience program has produced an exemplary assessment report, showcasing excellence in program evaluation. Their robust methodology for analysis and

interpretation of results is particularly noteworthy, incorporating an impressive collection of direct and indirect evidence drawn from three distinct sources. The program has developed a solid process for creating a representative and random sample, with artifacts collected from courses across the curriculum over four semesters, including multiple sections of larger courses. Additionally, the assessment process is enhanced by the inclusion of a faculty member outside the evaluation group, ensuring objectivity. Notably, the program's assessment committee reviews direct evidence rather than relying solely on course instructors' evaluations, underscoring their commitment to accurate and effective learning outcomes assessment. This diligent and comprehensive approach sets a high standard for program assessment within our academic community.

Item #5

RECOGNITION OF 2024 FACULTY ASSESSMENT FELLOWS: Faculty Peer Reviewers

Faculty engagement in the assessment process is a critical part of meaningful and manageable assessment which enhances the overall climate and supportive culture as faculty work collegially to examine the curricular experience and expected knowledge and skills of their graduates. Each spring, full-time faculty and lecturers have the opportunity to further develop their assessment knowledge and skills by applying to become an Assessment Fellow. Selected faculty participate in training to become peer reviewers of undergraduate and graduate program assessment reports and develop feedback for programs during the Assessment Retreat. The 2024 Assessment Fellows also listed below:

Douglas Gobeille, Teaching Professor, Physics
Kate Healy, Clinical Assistant Professor, Nursing
Gilberto Marquez Illescas, Assistant Professor, Accounting
Scott Kushner, Associate Professor, Communication Studies
Maquisha Mullins, Temporary Assistant Teaching Professor, Management
Brietta Oaks, Associate Professor, Nutrition
Simona Trandafir, Associate Professor, Environmental and Natural Resource Economics
Brett Still, Clinical Assistant Professor, Natural Resource Sciences

In spring 2023 & 2024, Julianna Golas, Associate Teaching Professor, Human Development and Family Studies (CHS), co-facilitated the design and delivery of the peer reviewer training and retreat sessions. Julianna had successfully completed the Assessment Fellows program in 2022.

As of May 2024, more than 60 faculty have earned the designation of Assessment Fellow and are recognized below for their commitment to supporting learning outcomes assessment through active participation in a faculty community. In 2024 the call for applicants was limited to returning reviewers and new reviewers in order to capitalize on both their experience as prior reviewers and the fresh skills and minds of new reviews while creating a mentoring partnership.

Participated 1 Year:
Brad Weatherbee, Marine Biology
Clarisa Carubin, Art and Art History
Crystal Green, Communication Studies
Jennifer Gill, Cellular and Molecular Biology
Madison Jones, Professional and Public Writing
Roberta King, Biomedical & Pharmaceutical Sciences

Ryan Chapman, Kinesiology
Yang Lin, Mechanical, Industrial and Electrical Engineering
Ali Akanda, Civil and Environmental Engineering
Christy Ashley, Business
Michael Barrus, Mathematics
Barbara Costello, Sociology
Sandy Hicks, Education
Rabia Hos, Education
I-Ling Hsu, Chinese
Anne Hubbard, Interdisciplinary Studies
Steven Irvine, Biology
Heather Johnson, Professional and Public Writing
Musa Jouaneh, Mechanical and Industrial and Systems Engineering
Diane Kern, Education
Sarah Larson, Nutrition
Mary MacDonald, Library Science
Lauren Mandel, Library Science
Kathleen Melanson, Nutrition
Libby Miles, English
Bethany Milner, Communicative Disorders
Mary Moen, Library Science
Roberta Newell, Accounting
LuAnne Roth, Professional and Public Writing
LeAnne Spino-Seijas, Spanish
Theodore Walls, Psychology
Ping Xu, Political Science
Scott Kushner, Communication Studies
Maquisha Mullins, Management
Kate Healy, Nursing
Gilberto Marquez-Illescas, Accounting

<u>Participated 2 Years:</u>
Jessica Alba, Psychology, Interdisciplinary Neuroscience
Alana Bibeau, Sociology
Kris Bovy, Anthropology
Izabela Ciesielksa-Wrobel, Textiles, Fashion Merchandising & Design
Leah Heilig, Professional and Public Writing
Gerard Jalette, Communication Studies
William Krieger, Philosophy
Aaron Ley, Political Science
Christine McGrane, Nursing
Samantha Meenach, Chemical Engineering, Pharmacy
Brian Plouffe, Cell and Molecular Biology
Ann-Marie Sacco, Business
Cathy Semnoski, Education
Douglas Gobeille, Physics
Brietta Oaks, Nutrition

Participated 3 years:
Melissa Boyd-Colvin, Leadership Minor
Michelle Flippin, Communicative Disorders
Norma Owens, Pharmacy
Simona Trandafir, Environmental and Natural Resource Economics
Julianna Golas, Human Development and Family Studies
Brett Still, Natural Resource Sciences

Participated 4 Years:
Emily Clapham, Kinesiology
Miriam Reumann, History

Participated 5 years:
Susan Brand, Education
Kristin Johnson, Political Science
Ingrid Lofgren, Nutrition and Food Science
Martha Waitkun, Communication Studies