

## Learning Outcomes Oversight Committee (LOOC) Annual Report<sup>1</sup> for Faculty Senate December 2022

The Learning Outcomes Oversight Committee (LOOC) is a joint Provost Office and Faculty Senate Committee committed to promoting, supporting, and ensuring effective assessment as an integral part of the student learning experience at the University of Rhode Island. LOOC affirms that program assessment is a University-wide responsibility supporting a commitment to curricular and student learning improvement. Data and results from outcomes assessment for all academic programs are examined in the aggregate only and are not used to evaluate individual faculty or students. The charges to the committee are contained within sections 5.84.10-5.84.12 of the University Manual.

The following report is a summary of the assessment reporting activity during the **2021-2022 academic year**<sup>1</sup>. Reporting results were compiled by the Office of Student Learning, Outcomes Assessment, and Accreditation (the Assessment Office), with review by Valerie Maier-Speredolozzi, a member of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee acting in the capacity of interim Chair of LOOC (see Appendix A for the updated 2023 committee membership).

### A. SUMMARY OF LOOC ACTIVITIES 2021-2022 AY

Valerie Maier-Speredolozzi agreed to serve as the interim LOOC Chair (Nov 2023) for the continuity of three critical facets of the LOOC's overarching purview: support the review and approval of new program Assessment Plans; review and deliver the annual institution-level summary of assessment reporting (from May of the preceding year), and to recognize those faculty and programs identified through peer review for their excellence in assessment reporting.

Note: Concerns about the status, need and impact of LOOC have been referenced in several recent [LOOC reports](#) (June 2019, March 2020, April 2021, November 2021) and remain important issues to address regarding this joint Provost/Faculty Senate committee, with considerations to the current role and function of the joint Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) and in light of the Faculty Senate subcommittee structure. These committees share the common goal of ensuring processes and practices are in place to support institutional effectiveness. At a minimum, support is needed for the most critical LOOC charges concerning assessment, curricular innovation and student learning improvement: ensuring the ability to respond to changes in NECHE expectations regarding assessment which could affect institution policy, oversight for approval of new program/certificate assessment plans, assessment reporting recognition, and support for various Assessment Office activities.

### Committee Actions (AY 2021-2022)

#### **Item #1:**

#### **New Program Assessment Plan Approval**

As of April 30, 2022, LOOC subcommittees (composed of 1 - 2 members of LOOC and the Chair) in conjunction with the Assessment Office, reviewed and approved Assessment Plans for the following new programs and new certificates. (NOTE: this is only one part of the new program approval process.)

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<sup>1</sup> This report is a summary of assessment reporting for programs with reports due in **May 2022**, which includes Cohort I and reports from Cohort II programs as expected. Biennial assessment reports are due each May, at graduation, in compliance with the faculty contract. Peer review of reports occurs in June/July; programs received feedback in August/September 2022; Deans receive institution-level summaries in the fall semester.

**Academic Programs**

Data Science, MS  
 Dietetics, BS  
 Nutrition, B

**Certificates (Graduate), all accelerated online**

Quantum Computing  
 School Certificate in Library and Media  
 Learning and Development  
 Data Analysis for Accounting  
 Medication Outcomes

**Item #2:****Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Reporting Summary**

Program-level assessment is the process faculty use to document and demonstrate a commitment to understanding student learning and uncovering ways to improve the educational experience for students in an academic program. The cohort based biennial reports are the University's tool to capture faculty effort to learn more about how things are going across a program and within a curriculum.

Success in reporting is defined by two metrics: 1) **compliance** with reporting expectations (all accredited and non-accredited programs, not certificates), and 2) **report quality**, which notes the use of best practices in outcomes assessment for examining student learning (non-accredited programs only) and is measured by peer reviewers using rubrics to score the reports. As noted in previous years, beginning with the 2016 cohort I reporting cycle, accredited programs are provided with a streamlined checklist type of report template in recognition of reporting demands from their accrediting agency or agencies. Both report types receive peer review with feedback sent to programs, however, due to the differences between the two assessment reporting templates and scoring tools, accredited programs do not receive formal recognition report quality. A third type of report template, the interim planning report, is a unique reporting option negotiated between a program and the Assessment Office, and are due between a programs reporting cycles, typically if a program requires more time in developing an assessment project or following up on results from a prior report, and they are always due if a program does not submit a report with their cohort and is considered non-compliant with reporting policy. These abbreviated reports are scored by a rubric with feedback provided to programs. Overall, interim reports are either satisfactory or incomplete.

Since 2012, the University of Rhode Island has followed a two cohort system for biennial reporting for more than 120 accredited and non-accredited academic programs with a mix of graduate and undergraduate programs reporting every May at graduation. Programs are divided into one of two cohorts with half of all programs (accredited and non-accredited) expected to report every other year. Since 2020, two reporting deadlines are offered to all reporting programs who can select the due date that works best for them: **Option 1**: Submit the report on or by graduation, per the faculty contract and Faculty Senate policy, on Sunday May 22, 2022; **Option 2**: Submit the report on or by Friday June 3, 2022 (2-week extension).

The 2022 reporting year included 43 cohort I non-accredited programs programs), 15 cohort I accredited programs and 3 interim planning reports from cohort I programs (17 interim reports were from cohort II programs, between cycles). The number of interim planning reports is linked to the effect of the COVID pandemic on program level reporting in 2020 and 2021. At that time, programs were offered several

flexible reporting options and the interim report was designed to help programs plan for how to regain traction in their assessment efforts. It continues to be a useful tool to support noncompliant programs or programs with staff/resource/other issues.

### Item #3:

#### Academic Program Recognition

Assessment reports are evaluated during a one-week summer retreat, following a 3-day intensive training and norming session for faculty reviewers. A two-level faculty team peer review process results in final scores for each item of a report. Due to the variation of report types this round, an increased number of reviewers were funded and trained for peer review: 12 faculty served on peer review teams for the first round of review (Level 1); each reviewer then served as an independent reviewer (Level 2) of all reports providing oversight to ensure consistency in the review and scoring process.

Scoring rubrics guide report review of assessment report templates (accredited, non-accredited, interim). To meet expectations in reporting, both non-accredited and accredited program reports are expected to achieve a score of "Satisfactory". Programs exceeding expectations are recognized for their excellence in assessment practice (Section C, Recognition, Page 4). It is important to note that rubric scores assigned by peer reviewers reflect neither a judgment about instructors nor the student learning results revealed during the assessment process, but rather, all scores reflect the level of achievement of well defined criteria by programs in their effort to use best practices and processes in assessment. Results are intended strictly for use by academic programs for curricular or assessment process improvement.

#### B. ASSESSMENT REPORTING: Compliance and Report Quality Results for (Cohort I) May 2022 Reports

Compliance scores represent the number of programs expected to report per the cohort calendar.

Reports with performance scores that met or exceeded expectations are noted. Reports scoring below the expected level of achievement are not included.

### 2022 Assessment Report Results

#### COMPLETED A TRADITIONAL, FULL REPORT

##### Non-Accredited Programs

*Sec I. New Assessment Activity - a new outcome is examined each cycle, or an outcome is re-examined in a new way (required by all programs each round unless exceptions are made):*

24 Undergraduate programs: 23 submitted (96%); 18 met or exceeded expectations (95%)

18 Graduate programs: 11 submitted (61%); 6 met or exceeded expectations (82%)

*Sec II. Follow-up Assessment Activity - follow-up on recommendations from the prior round of reporting, 2020 (required whenever a program makes a recommendation for improvement):*

8 Undergraduate programs: 6 submitted (75%); 5 met or exceeded expectations (71%)

7 Graduate programs: 3 submitted (43%); 1 met or exceeded expectations (33%)

##### Accredited Programs (only reporting option)

11 Undergraduate programs: 11 submitted (100%); 10 met or exceeded expectations (91%)

4 Graduate programs: 4 submitted (100%); 3 met or exceeded expectations (75%)

#### COMPLETED AN INTERIM PLANNING REPORT (Non-Accredited programs only; available per Assessment Office approval as a unique planning option)

Sec I. New Assessment Activity:

1 Undergraduate program: 1 submitted (100%); 1 satisfactory (100%)

2 Graduate programs: 1 submitted (50%); 1 satisfactory (50%)

**COMPLETED A NARRATIVE (Non-Accredited Programs Only; unique option, available per Assessment Office approval; notes as an indicator of engagement)**

3 Undergraduate programs: 2 submitted (67%)

**C. RECOGNITION FOR EXCELLENCE IN ASSESSMENT REPORTING**

All report submissions are peer reviewed with timely feedback provided to programs in late summer/early fall. Note that recognition for excellence in reporting is currently available for non-accredited undergraduate and graduate programs. This does not diminish the content nor quality of the assessment information provided in reports from accredited programs. Such programs, however, complete a very streamlined report template which does not require authentic assessment of student learning, but rather summary issues and metrics.

Recognition is determined by the rubric scores as defined by criteria related to the assessment process used, and is not a reflection of faculty, teaching or the results found from the assessment project.

Scoring follows:

**Non-accredited programs scores:**

- **Advanced:** Criteria met for **exceeding expectations**.
- **Satisfactory:** Criteria met for **expectations**.
- **Developing:** Criteria not met for expectations; room for improvement identified.
- **Missing:** The items within the report or a section(s) of the report 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).

(Note programs completing mid-cycle interim planning reports receive feedback. Those noted for overall excellence in planning are included below.

**REPORT RECOGNITION**

Ten programs from cohort I, May 2022, were recognized for excellence in assessment reporting. Report highlights follow below:

- I. **ADVANCED scores for all major and all item-level areas of the report for one or both sections of the report.** This is the highest level of achievement this round:

Program	Department	College	Faculty Member(s) Submitting Report
<b>Undergraduate</b>			
Animal Science & Technology, BS	Department of Fisheries, Animal & Veterinary Science	College of the Environment and Life Sciences	<b>Justin Richard</b>
Art History, BA	Art and Art History	College of Arts and Sciences	<b>Lisa Tom</b>

- II. **ADVANCED scores for all major areas of one or both sections of the report:**

Program	Department	College	Faculty Member(s) Submitting Report
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Undergraduate			
Cellular & Molecular Biology, BS	Cellular and Molecular Biology	Environmental and Life Sciences	Joel M. Chandlee
Economics, BA/BS (Section	Economics	Arts and Sciences	Chris Briggs Liam Malloy

III. **ADVANCED** scores for the *overall report score* for one or both section of the report:

Program	Department	College	Faculty Member(s) Submitting Report
Undergraduate			
Political Science, BA	Political Science	Arts and Sciences	Ping Xu Ashlea Rundlett
Health Studies, BS	Health Studies	Health Sciences	Molly Greaney Natalie Sabik
Graduate			
Kinesiology, MS	Kinesiology	Health Sciences	Matthew J. Delmonico

**Additional recognition:** This round, seven interim reports were recognized for excellence in assessment planning:

Undergraduate: Chinese BA, Communication Studies BA, French BA, , Italian BA, Spanish BA, Sociology BA

Graduate: Computer Science MS/PhD

## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

I. **ADVANCED** scores for *all major and all item-level areas* of the report for one or both sections of the report:

### COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LIFE SCIENCES

#### **Animal and Veterinary Science, BS**

**Lead Writer: Justin Richard**

Program faculty engage in rigorous assessment methods: planning and action to fully close the loop and use results to inform change. The program looks at all stages of learning in the curriculum to uncover patterns across students, and faculty work to ensure that there are shared expectations of student learning by defining component skills of each outcome with student learning expectations at four levels. Faculty also work on the vertical alignment of course outcomes, assignments, and activities to program outcomes so students can build knowledge. This round, faculty used prior results (2020) to make improvements and adopted and examined a new learning outcome, scientific literacy this round, finding a knowledge gap which was addressed in several ways between 2020 and 2022, with changes also made to assessment process and the curriculum: developed/tested a rubric criteria; developed a set of rigorous scaffolded assignments to build foundational skills in an introductory course requirement to ensure students in upper-level courses had sufficient time to build knowledge; infused activities across more courses; increased the number of common core courses to ensure pathways to developing critical knowledge that could be missed when selecting from various electives, and to ensure early skill building improved performance in upper-level courses. This assessment project established a baseline for effectiveness of the changes on student performance going forward, the value of a clearly articulated rubric for the outcome which could be aligned with critical courses and activities and exemplified a highly collaborative faculty and effective planning for assessment with over 1250 samples of student work examined. Results also prompted additional recommendations for improvement in course design, learning resources, and the assessment process.

## II. **ADVANCED** scores for *all major areas* of one or both sections of the report:

### **COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES**

#### **Art History, BA**

**Lead Writer: Lisa Tom**

This program created learning outcome pathways to align all tracks within the major to a core set of program outcomes using rubric criteria to evaluate learning achievement. The program provided extensive documentation for summarizing the learning results in order to look for patterns of strength and weakness. Five faculty participated in the rigorous assessment project scoring their own student work with secondary scoring for reliability of results to assess 3 outcomes: expressing key issues, creative/interpretative and research skills in final research papers/projects across 11 upper-level courses in multiple semesters, predominantly core/required courses; two program tracks/courses. Performance of students in the tracks were on par with expectations and results did not surprise the program whereby all students were only somewhat weaker in the creative/interpretative outcome. Faculty plan to review and recalibrate the rubric to ensure improved consistency in scoring work, and to share results broadly with all instructors to strengthen the effort to further develop these skills at all course levels across all academic paths. Strong faculty engagement in the assessment process.

### **COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LIFE SCIENCES**

#### **CELLULAR & MOLECULAR BIOLOGY, BS**

**Lead Writer: Joel Chandlee**

The program examined the quantitative skills of upper division students in five courses of differing levels of skill development over five semesters of data collection. Varied types of student work (multiple choice questions, open-ended questions, lab reports, written reports) were examined to address several performance areas within the learning outcome. Rubrics were created with guidelines defined by all faculty and results summarized for the Curriculum committee. The results satisfied the program because overall, students met the standard of 75% achieving performance expectations and the program was able to document success within *and* across courses. This suggested that the current curriculum is successful in developing quantitative skills, prompting the program to set a higher standard of achievement (now 80%) and to consider further defining the performance areas within the outcome.

The program also implemented specific strategies to increase student learning when following up on prior reports that had uncovered areas where students struggled to integrate their understanding of fundamental concepts of chemistry and biology in order to develop critical thinking skills. Suggested strategies included: faculty developing methods for course content delivery with greater emphasis on the importance of specific concepts presented in the lectures, in addition to including more graphics and class discussion focusing on key concepts. Re-assessment results showed that the integration of various pedagogical changes by the instructors for three courses was very successful and improved student performance above the proficiency goals, which have now been raised (see above).

## III. **ADVANCED** scores for the *overall report score* for one or both section of the report:

### **COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES**

#### **Economics BA/BS**

**Lead Writers: Chris Briggs, Liam Malloy**

Faculty in five courses examined all program learning outcomes (12 types of student work) from multiple sections of sophomores through seniors and included research papers, presentations, exams, etc. The program provided extensive documentation for summarizing the learning results in order to look for patterns of strength and weakness. The program has planned curricular revision for this academic year, using results to ensure student learning is scaffolded and assessed across courses and throughout the curriculum. The program found high levels of achievement for certain outcomes such as quantitative skills at the lower levels, and plans to continue to look for ways to increase achievement in upper division courses. The program also found students achieving higher scores on different types of assessments in their writing intensive course (papers versus exams) and while meeting their learning goal, they are continuing to think about the students who are not achieving and consider different ways to capture learning. The program acknowledges high standards with their capstone, and while applauding student presentations, they identified the need for more time to build certain skills that are necessary for their graduates. The results were interpreted and shared by the instructors and the program assessment committee.

### **POLITICAL SCIENCE, BA**

**Lead Writers: Ping Xu and Ashlea Rundlett**

Highlights of the report included the engagement of faculty in all levels of assessment. This round, strong methods were used to examine student work from multiple semesters, using multiple types of artifacts (including original research capstone projects, embedded exam questions, and papers from multiple 200- and 400-level courses) which yielded hundreds of examples of student work from which faculty examined all four program student learning outcomes, looked at results across courses, and compared them to prior years. External faculty scorers (beyond faculty teaching the courses) provided support for data interpretation. Results varied across outcomes and in comparison to prior years which raised ongoing concerns about the effect of COVID on student performance and prompted thoughts about student preparation given the mixed types of instruction students experienced. Faculty felt that the declines observed are largely due to the interruptions of the pandemic and recommendations included finding ways to provide the best of both learning experiences for students. For example, faculty are encouraged to keep using (pre)recorded videos to help students better understand certain concepts, use pandemic-era weekly assignments to help students build the capstone projects, emphasize core concepts on theories and methods in their course discussions, align teaching strategies and assessment stringency across different courses, and to continue to collect and compare data.

An update on prior recommendations for learning improvement was also provided and included goals of engaging faculty to align teaching with assessment, improving student learning by increasing practice of writing as preparation for the capstone, increasing opportunities for more presentations to improve overall communication skills, and retaining practices that were effective when teaching fully remotely, such as weekly assignments.

### **COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES**

**HEALTH STUDIES, BS**

**Lead Writer: Molly Greaney, Natalie Sabik**

Introductory courses were used to check student development of foundational skills, knowledge and critical thinking skills across multiple semesters, courses and types of student work. Overall students' performance was satisfactory in all courses/sections (using quiz/test questions including short answers). Faculty are reviewing the methods used for assessing these skills and considering whether the use of

more similar assessment items across sections might be more helpful for assessment, adapting to instructor goals, but improving the value of the results of the overall assessment process.

The program followed upon prior report recommendations to fully assess the revised outcome on ethical principles and context within the discipline, noting a concern about the alignment of assignments with the revised outcome is critical to determining how best to understand student achievement of the outcome.

## **KINESIOLOGY, MS**

**Lead Writer: Matthew J. Delmonico**

The program checked on student ability to successfully conduct rigorous research by examining the thesis proposal using a rubric to score 5 elements with several criteria for two cohorts of students, also providing an opportunity for faculty to give feedback on the quality of the proposals. Extensive data summaries revealed that students were on track for success and the program was satisfied with the results which also highlighted areas of possible improvement to consider including whether students should develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter and theoretical concepts earlier in the proposal process. At this time, the program expects these areas to naturally improve as the thesis proposals undergo further development, but it would be helpful to impact this learning area earlier.

## **D. RECOGNITION OF FACULTY ASSESSMENT FELLOWS AND ASSESSMENT MENTORS**

Faculty engagement in the assessment process is a critical part of meaningful and manageable assessment which enhances the climate and culture of assessment 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 and participate in training to become a peer reviewer of undergraduate and graduate program assessment reports. Following report review, Fellows are invited to share their experiences and knowledge volunteering as Assessment Mentors, available to provide expertise about reporting excellence and assessment practice to colleagues in other programs. Mentorship opportunities began in Fall 2018 and have enhanced URI's capacity for excellence in assessment. The 2022 Mentors and Fellows and the June 2022 peer review process can be found here: <https://web.uri.edu/atl/who/mentors/>

As of May 2022, more than 60 faculty have earned the designation of Assessment Fellow and are recognized below for their commitment to supporting learning outcomes assessment through participation in the peer review process as a Level 1 and/or Level 2 oversight peer reviewer. For the past two years (2021 and 2022) the call for applicants has been for new reviewers (not repeat) to continue to grow the base for Assessment Fellows:

### Participated 1 Year:

Brad Weatherbee, Marine Biology  
 Brian Plouffe, Cell and Molecular Biology  
 Clarisa Carubin, Art and Art History  
 Crystal Green, Communication Studies  
 Izabela Ciesielksa-Wrobel, Textiles, Fashion Merchandising & Design  
 Jennifer Gill, Cellular and Molecular Biology  
 Julianna Golas, Human Development and Family Studies  
 Leah Heilig, Writing and Rhetoric  
 Madison Jones, Writing and Rhetoric  
 Roberta King, Biomedical & Pharmaceutical Sciences



Ryan Chapman, Kinesiology  
Yang Lin, Mechanical, Industrial and Electrical Engineering  
Ali Akanda, Civil and Environmental Engineering  
Jessica Alber, Psychology, Interdisciplinary Neuroscience  
Christy Ashley, Business  
Michael Barrus, Mathematics  
Barbara Costello, Sociology  
Douglas Gobeille, Physics  
Sandy Hicks, Education  
Rabia Hos, Education  
I-Ling Hsu, Chinese  
Anne Hubbard, Interdisciplinary Studies  
Steven Irvine, Biology  
Heather Johnson, Writing & Rhetoric  
Musa Jouaneh, Mechanical and Industrial and Systems Engineering  
Diane Kern, Education  
William Krieger, Philosophy  
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  
Brietta Oaks, Nutrition  
LuAnne Roth, Writing & Rhetoric  
LeAnne Spino-Seijas, Spanish  
Brett Still, Natural Resource Sciences  
Theodore Walls, Psychology  
Ping Xu, Political Science

Participated 2 Years:

Alana Bibeau, Sociology  
Kris Bovy, Anthropology  
Michelle Flippin, Communicative Disorders  
Gerard Jalette, Communication Studies  
Aaron Ley, Political Science  
Christine McGrane, Nursing  
Samantha Meenach, Chemical Engineering, Pharmacy  
Ann-Marie Sacco, Business  
Cathy Semnoski, Education  
Simona Trandafir, Environmental and Natural Resource Economics

Participated 3 years:

Melissa Boyd-Colvin, Leadership Minor  
Emily Clapham, Kinesiology  
Norma Owens, Pharmacy

Participated 4 Years:

Miriam Reumann, History

Participated 5 years:

Susan Brand, Education

Kristin Johnson, Political Science

Ingrid Lofgren, Nutrition and Food Science

Martha Waitkun, Communication Studies

**Appendix A**  
**Learning Outcomes Oversight Membership\***  
**2022-2023 AY**

Valerie Maier-Speredolozzi, Faculty Senate Executive Committee, agreed to be the interim LOOC Chair for the 2022-2023 academic year to facilitate the most critical responsibilities of the committee. The LOOC membership list is hosted on the Faculty Senate website with the membership term when available:

Christy Ashley, COB (23), Graduate Council member  
 Carolyn Betensky (23), A&S representative, FS\* Appointment  
 Jayne Pawasauskas, (23), FS\* Appointment, PHM Rep  
 Lori Ciccomascolo, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs  
 Mary Leveille, Associate Dean CON, Dean of a Degree-Granting College Rep  
 Elaine Finan, Assistant Director, Office of Assessment Office, ATL  
 Kathleen Torrens, Interim, Director Office for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning  
 Anne Veeger, Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Initiatives  
 Vacancy, FS\* appointee, CEPS representative  
 Vacancy, FS\* appointee, COE representative  
 Vacancy FS\* appointee, CHS rep  
 Vacancy, FS\* appointee, CELS representative  
 Vacancy, FS\* appointee, A&S representative  
 Vacancy, FS\* appointee, General Education Subcommittee representative  
 Vacancy, FS\* appointee, Teaching, Advising, and Assessment Committee representative  
 Vacancy, FS\* appointee, Curriculum and Standards Committee representative  
 Vacancy, Office of Institutional Research

\*Faculty Senate Office: [2023 LOOC Committee membership](#)